

Muslims, Serbs sign ceasefire

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Serbs and Muslims on Friday signed a ceasefire to take effect at day, late at noon (1100 GMT) on Saturday and Serbs said they had already ordered their forces to stop fighting. "This is the most serious ceasefire reached in Bosnia," United Nations spokesman Alexander Ivanov said after intense shuttle diplomacy by U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi yielded the deal. The ceasefire should have started at noon on Friday. But Mr. Akashi was still negotiating a simplified version of the agreement, removing serious obstacles, when the deadline came (see inside). Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic agreed to a ceasefire until Jan. 1 to be followed by a four-month "cessation of hostilities." Mr. Akashi said international talks on a big power peace plan would happen during the second phase while the United Nations deployed peacekeeping forces between the warring sides. The agreement crowned private mediation by U.S. President Jimmy Carter who was called in by Bosnian Serbs to break the deadlock in efforts to end almost 33 months of war in Bosnia.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي.

Arafat to visit Jordan Sunday — official

AMMAN (AFP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat will visit Jordan Sunday for talks with King Hussein on the latest developments in the Middle East. Palestinian officials said Friday. It will be Mr. Arafat's first visit to Amman since Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel on Oct. 26. The officials said the talks would focus on the "special role" in administering Muslim shrines in Jerusalem accorded to Jordan by the peace treaty. Mr. Arafat, who heads the Palestinian self-rule authority, was not invited to the signing ceremony on the Jordanian-Israeli border, which was attended by U.S. President Bill Clinton. Jordan has said it planned to maintain custody over the holy shrines only until Palestinian autonomy was extended to Jerusalem. Negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem are due to begin in May 1996.

Volume 19 Number 5801

AMMAN SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1994, RAJAB 21, 1415

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

holidy declared

AMMAN (Petra) — All ministries, government departments and public institutions will be closed Thursday Dec. 29 in observance of Al Israa Wal Miraj anniversary, which falls on Friday, Dec. 30. This was announced by a communique issued Friday by Prime Minister Abdulalam Majali. Al Israa Wal Miraj marks the Prophet Mohammad's nocturnal trip to heaven.

Nazareth Muslims celebrate Christmas

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Muslims in the town of Nazareth in northern Israel where Jesus lived have decked out their mosque with Christmas decorations and will celebrate the Christmas festival. "We celebrate Christmas every year, 400 Muslim scouts will take part in the festivities in Nazareth," said Atef Yusef Al Fahum, leader of the town's White Mosque. The mosque devoted its sermon at Friday prayers to the subject of Christmas. "Christ is a prophet for Muslims, his birth was recorded in the Koran," Mr. Fahum said. "It is fitting Christmas should be the subject of today's sermon." Nazareth Mayor Ramez Jaraisi hailed the initiative of the White Mosque, the largest mosque in the town of Israel's Galilee region. "It shows fraternity and unity. It shows the true face of Nazareth," Mr. Jaraisi said, adding that "all the town's festivals are shared by everyone."

Yoga is answer to Israeli security fears

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Yoga could be the answer to Israel's security problems and prevent another Middle East war, a fighter pilot told Israel Radio here Friday proposing the formation of a special squadron of yogis. Air force yoga experts were able to create a "magnetic field which will help bring a serene atmosphere to the entire region," Commander Reuven Zilinkovsky said. The proposal had been submitted to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, he added. "Just as our country has a nuclear power station and an army for defence, so there should be a squadron of yogis. That will break down the hostility surrounding us, and so prevent another war in the Middle East," said Mr. Zilinkovsky, an electronics engineer. He said yoga experts had already dispersed hostility emanating from two Arab villages in the Galilee region of northern Israel — Deir Hana and Sakhnin. "We live in perfect harmony with their inhabitants," Mr. Zilinkovsky said. "What is true for Galilee can also be true for Lebanon," he added.

Bridegroom killed in clash with police

KARACHI, Pakistan (R) — Two people including the bridegroom were killed and nine were wounded on Friday in a clash between police and a wedding party in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi. An angry crowd then tried to burn down the nearby police station. "We can't say what's happening. There is firing from all sides," a policeman inside the station told Reuters by telephone.

Saudi, Yemeni beheaded for murder

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi and a Yemeni condemned to death for two separate murders were beheaded in Saudi Arabia on Friday, the Interior Ministry said here. The Saudi, Hassan Assayiri, was found guilty of killing a fellow Saudi in a personal quarrel, the ministry said in a statement quoted by state radio. He was executed in Riyadh. Ahmad Ben Ali Ma'ad, a Yemeni, killed one of his compatriots for similar reasons and was executed in Jeddah on the Red Sea coast.

Russian deputies seek truce as warplanes continue to hit Grozny

Concern mounts in West over casualties

GROZNY (Agencies) — Russian forces pounded Grozny, the Chechen capital, with bombs and artillery rounds on Friday and Russia's lower house of parliament appealed to President Boris Yeltsin and his rivals to halt the fighting.

France and Britain also voiced concern about the situation in the breakaway, mainly Muslim region of Chechnya after a relentless bombardment of Grozny since Thursday that has claimed dozens of lives. So far the rest of the world has been silent.

"I don't know who can stop this, but someone must stop it. Please, stop it," a young Grozny woman, fighting back tears as she held her daughter's hand, told Russia's independent television channel NTV.

Deputies in Russia's State Duma appealed for an urgent ceasefire after jets bombed Grozny hourly through the night, damaging buildings and killing more civilians after carnage the previous day. The Duma voted 238 to 38 with three abstentions to back a call for a moratorium on military actions and to hold peace talks, but efforts to call a no-confidence motion against Mr. Yeltsin failed.

There was no immediate response from any side and hopes of ending the fighting seemed unlikely.

Russia, which sent troops to Chechnya on Dec. 11 to halt the region's three-year drive for independence, has stiffened its military campaign in the last two days by intensifying air strikes on central Grozny.

Russian troops backed by artillery and helicopter

gunships were waging a major assault to completely seal off Grozny.

Elite marines units and two motorised divisions arrived in the region Friday and sealed off the capital of the breakaway Chechnya republic, a Russian government spokesman in Moscow said.

The official said the information had come from the command headquarters of the Russian operation in Chechnya, adding that the report had been "verified."

"The Siberian and Urals motorised divisions and marines units have arrived around Grozny to reinforce troops already present on the ground," reported the ITAR-TASS news agency, citing a government statement.

Earlier, fierce fighting was reported east of Grozny as Russian troops mounted a major attack against the strategic town of Argun about 20 kilometres away in a bid to complete their encirclement of the capital.

Argun stands on the road from Grozny to Gudermes in the neighbouring Republic of Dagestan, whose border with Chechnya was closed by Russian troops Friday.

Russian troops, sent Dec. 11 to crush the rebel republic's three-year-old independence bid, control exits from the city to the west and north. The southern route is open to allow refugees to flee, but it does not communicate by road with adjoining republics.

Correspondents at Argun reported that the Russians' bombardment of the town had killed Chechen fighters with belt-clipper gunships and artillery. Warplanes roared overhead. Smoke poured out of Argun and two positions near the

town.

At 11:00 a.m. (0800 GMT) about eight Chechen defenders hid behind a concrete barricade on the strategic road armed with a heavy machine-gun for shooting at the helicopters and anti-tank grenade launchers.

But the odds were clearly stacked against them. Four helicopters flew low in wide circles over the flat, snow-covered fields by the road, firing rockets and machineguns at anything that moved.

Just outside Argun, a helicopter opened machinegun fire on a correspondent and his Chechen driver from a distance of about 400 metres. "Kicking up snow less than a couple of metres away."

The Russian defence ministry earlier warned journalists to leave combat zones following the death of freelance American photographer Cynthia Elbaum, who died in a Russian air raid on Grozny Thursday.

Western governments called on Moscow on Friday to limit civilian casualties in the conflict in Chechnya, a sign of their growing concern over the repercussions of Russia's military adventure in the North Caucasian region.

Britain and France said they had told Moscow they were worried about the growing number of civilian casualties in Grozny.

A British Foreign Office spokesman said London had signalled its concerns through diplomatic channels.

A French foreign ministry spokesman said Paris had asked the Kremlin to protect foreign nationals and journalists, a day after calling on

(Continued on page 7)



A man sits on the remains of his house destroyed by a bomb after several air strikes by the Russian forces over Grozny (AFP photo)

Israeli, Syrian generals meet in bid to end deadlock

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — An Israeli delegation led by Chief of Staff General Ehud Barak has held talks with high-ranking Syrian military officials in Washington, in the first such meeting since 1949.

The talks Thursday dealt with security problems linked to any future Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, the stumbling block in three years of peace negotiations, military radio said Friday.

The radio did not name the Syrian officials but said the team was led by a general. The Israeli delegation included Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's advisor General Danny Yatom.

The military officials were accompanying the ambassadors of Israel and Syria in Washington, Itamar Rabinovich and Walid Moualem, who resumed their talks on Thursday.

Yossi Olmert, a researcher at the Hebrew University here, said it was an important meeting.

Senior Israeli and Syrian officers have held talks before, but this is the first time since the signing of the 1949 armistice accord with Syria in (the Greek island of) Rhodes that an Israeli chief of staff has attended.

Syria was the last Arab

country to sign an armistice with Israel, on July 20, 1949.

The officials are to resume their discussions next week following the Christmas holiday in Washington, the radio said. The Israeli delegation left for home Friday.

In an interview published by the Jerusalem Post newspaper, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the level of Syrian representation at the talks was still not high enough to produce a breakthrough.

The negotiations are stuck on the scope and timing of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan as well as the type of peaceful relations to be established.

Syria suspended its formal negotiations with Israel after the Hebron Mosque massacre in February.

Mr. Peres said peace with Israel was not on Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's agenda.

"He has another agenda and that is the Arab World. He wants to demonstrate to the Arab World that he knows how to negotiate better than anyone else. He thinks he is winning. And he probably thinks that the United States can exercise much more pressure," on Israel, Mr. Peres said.

According to Mr. Olmert, who said he had contacted

Syrian experts, the Israeli government has concluded that "it will not reach peace with Syria without a total withdrawal from the Golan, but in return it wants security guarantees which Damascus is hesitating to give."

Israel and Syria had agreed in principle on a demilitarisation of areas on both sides of their future border and the deployment of an international observer force, Mr. Olmert said.

However, Syria rejected an Israeli call to reduce the size of its army and to allow Israeli observation posts at strategic points on the Golan after a withdrawal.

General Barak is due to retire as armed forces chief on January 1.

Israeli diplomats said U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was not expected to return to the Middle East before February.

Gen. Barak told the Dec. 26 issue of U.S. News and World Report magazine that a long stalemate in negotiations with Syria "makes another confrontation very probable."

Gen. Barak said Syria had 4,000 tanks, 700 warplanes and missiles such as Scud Bs and C3s and chemical weapons more advanced than Iraq's that could strike Israel.

Violence subsides in Bahrain

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Police armed with assault rifles and tear-gas stood ready for action outside Shiite Muslim mosques in the Bahraini capital Manama Friday but witnesses said the streets were calm after two weeks of clashes.

The Shiite pilgrims Sanabes, Jid Hafs, Dain, Barbar and Al Diraz were also calm, a witness who visited them Friday said.

Other witnesses contacted from Cyprus said sermons delivered at Friday prayers in Sunni Muslim mosques in Manama made no mention of the clashes which claimed the lives of five demonstrators and four policemen, according to the opposition.

The authorities only reported the death of one policeman.

In a statement received by AFP early Friday, the banned Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) had predicted demonstrations after Friday prayers in Jid Hafs and Sanabes.

One witness said the streets of Al Diraz were virtually deserted, but still littered with burnt tyres.

In Budaya further north, the scene of repeated clashes since Dec. 5, armed police patrolled the streets in force, he said.

Violence erupted in Bahrain last week when hundreds of Shiite Muslims held protests to demand the release of Shiite cleric Sheikh Ali Salman, who was arrested after calling for the restoration of parliament, suspended in 1975.

The IFLB said more than 1,600 people were arrested, with Muslim clerics especially targeted.

Bahrain, apparently irritated by what it sees as exaggerated Iranian news coverage of the unrest, has recalled its ambassador from Tehran for consultations.

A brief report Friday distributed by the official Gulf News Agency reported the return of Ambassador Sami Khalil Al Moayed on Thursday.

It said he was "summoned for consultations at the foreign ministry," without elaboration.

But Arab diplomats said Tehran's state-guided radio and television had been reporting on the Bahrain tensions with such intensity as to raise suspicion in government circles about whether Tehran was out to incite the unrest.

The diplomats, speaking on condition they not be named, said officials also were upset about perceived exaggerations and false reports aired by the Tehran media.

They mentioned in particular an Iranian-carried report of nine killed in the unrest, and said officials insisted that was not true.

Israeli jets hit Lebanon after two soldiers killed

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli planes struck at Hizbollah targets in South Lebanon on Friday after the guerrillas killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded seven in heavy attacks on Israeli bases.

Heavy fighting erupted in Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone when Hizbollah (Party of God) guerrillas attacked Israeli posts at Suweida and Dabshah on the northern edge of the zone.

An Israeli army spokesman said two soldiers were killed and several wounded in the attacks. He said Israeli troops returned fire, killing several Hizbollah men.

They brought to 21 the number of Israeli soldiers killed this year in South Lebanon — the Jewish state's last active battlefront with neighbouring Arab countries.

Israel has lost six dead and 18 wounded in the south this month.

The Lebanese army declared a state of maximum alert and said it returned fire at Israeli positions.

Friday's clashes came two days after a bombing which killed three people and wounded 14 others in Sfir, a Hizbollah stronghold in southern Beirut.

Hizbollah said its raids were in retaliation for the bombing, which it blamed on Israel.

In a communique released in the southern port of Sidon, Hizbollah said it had raided three Israeli positions at the northern tip of the security zone, "causing many casualties in enemy ranks."

It said the "commands of the martyrs of Sfir attacked the Zionist enemy."

One of those killed in the Beirut bombing Wednesday was Foad Moghniyeh, whose brother Imad Moghniyeh is widely suspected of being the mastermind behind the taking of Western hostages between 1984 and 1988.

Hizbollah warned that there would be no let-up in attacks on Israeli forces.

Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri also accused Israel of being behind Wednesday's bombing.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking to reporters near Israel's northern border after the attack, ruled out expanding the Jewish state's 15-kilometre deep occupation zone.

"Any attempt to... expand the security zone will force us to commit more forces, to allow them greater geographic mobility and the number of casualties will rise without changing anything for (the security of) residents of the north," he said.

Security sources in Lebanon said Israeli planes staged hit-and-run assaults by firing

four rockets at Hizbollah targets in Iqim Al Toufah ridge, 40 kilometres south of Beirut from which guerrillas launch attacks on the Israeli-occupied zone.

A Hizbollah guerrilla was wounded in the raid and two Lebanese policemen were killed — apparently burned alive — when an Israeli helicopter rocketed their service jeep five kilometres north of the zone.

SLA sources said the guerrillas rained Sagger missiles, anti-tank rockets, mortar bombs and heavy machinegun fire on the Israeli and SLA posts.

Israeli and SLA tanks and artillery fired back into hills north of the zone, hitting villages, the sources added.

U.N. observers in the region said the Israelis and SLA fired more than 200 shells but there was no word on casualties.

Israeli planes then struck at Hizbollah-controlled areas in their first raid on Lebanon since Nov. 13 and their 30th attack this year.

A Reuters reporter saw a helicopter fire a missile into a Lebanese police jeep outside the zone. The impact turned the jeep over and set it on fire and a policeman could be seen burning inside. Security sources said two policemen, including the chief of police in Jba'a village, were killed.

ملكو اصة لامل



A municipality worker fixes Christmas decorations in Bethlehem's Manger Square (AFP photo)

U.N. calls for money to fund Somalia aid

NEW YORK (Agencies) — The United Nations appealed Thursday for countries to donate millions of dollars in emergency aid for Somalia even as U.N. troops are removed from the war-torn country.

The U.N. call for \$70.3 million in humanitarian aid will finance programmes running from Jan. 1 until June 30 of next year, the U.N. Department on Humanitarian Affairs said in a statement.

The money would be spent on children's schooling, demobilising combatants, repatriating refugees, and supporting health centres, among other uses.

The aid call comes as the U.N. Mission in Somalia mandate ends. The U.N. force will leave Somalia by March 31 next year.

The U.N. Security Council

ordered the pullout last October because of a breakdown of security conditions in Somalia.

There are currently some 13,000 peacekeepers in Somalia. A total of 130 have been killed.

Despite the pullout, the U.N. humanitarian agencies are determined to continue humanitarian programmes whenever and wherever possible, the U.N. statement said.

"Failure to do so will result in a predictable new emergency which will, as in the past, exact a tragic toll in human lives and have severe consequences for stability in the sub-region," the statement continued.

Belgians cleared

A Belgian military court

has cleared three paratroops who served with the U.N. peacekeeping force in Somalia of manslaughter and other charges.

Lawyer Erik Carre, who represents the family of a dead Somali, Mohammad Osman, said the court ruled that the soldiers did not act outside the rules of engagement applicable to peacekeeping missions.

The three men were alleged to have committed the offences while serving with the United Nations in the southern Somali port of Kismayu, where more than 850 Belgian troops were based for one year from December 1992.

Military auditor Nicolas van Winsen told a court hearing earlier in December that military authorities were investigating 268 cases against Belgian troops, of which 58

involved involuntary homicide or injuries inflicted on Somalis.

Mr. Carre, who works with the association Lawyers Without Borders, said he thought the investigation and trial of the three paratroops had been "a show."

"There has been an acquittal so damages cannot be awarded," he told reporters outside the court room. "I am therefore obliged to make an appeal. I think I will do it."

Mr. Carre said five more paratroops would appear in court on Jan. 10 on torture charges.

The Belgian government ordered an inquiry after a Belgian radio journalist and the independent human rights group Africa Rights alleged that Belgian troops based in Kismayu had killed and beaten civilians.

Muslims, Christians share Christmas spirit

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Christmas is in the air here as Muslims and the small Christian community join together to celebrate the festive season, even supporters of the hardline Hamas group are capturing the Christmas spirit.

Putting aside religious differences for the festive season, even supporters of the hardline Hamas group are capturing the Christmas spirit.

At a nursery school run by an all-Christian board of directors, veiled Muslim mothers looked on as Santa Claus handed out gifts to their children.

"Many of our pupils come from Hamas and Islamic Jihad families," said Rika Tarazi, headmistress of the nursery which has a majority of Muslims.

"These mothers were among the first to pay the fees for our Christmas party," she said, adding families who supported the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas had "encouraged us, and written us letters of appreciation."

Christianity came to Gaza around the 4th century, and an ancient Greek Orthodox church building in downtown Gaza dates back to the 5th century.

Most of the one million Gazans are Muslims, while the 2,000 Christians mostly belong to the Greek Orthodox Church which observes Christmas on Jan. 7.

Other than the small 230-strong Catholic community, about 50 Baptists will celebrate Christmas here on Sunday, Dec. 25.

Like many Christians here, Ms. Tarazi was not worried about the growing influence of Hamas.

"They are a political party. They respect us and we have never had problems with them. I am not at all troubled by the thought of them possibly gaining more power."

Hamas anger has so far been directed against Israel, and there have been no known cases of anti-Christian feeling here.

The group is opposed to the autonomy deal with Israel, but is pushing to run in local municipal elections, and has won favour among many Palestinians for its charity schools and clinics.

For Ms. Tarazi's nursery, this was the first quiet Christmas, without strikes, burning tires, and gunfire that marked the years of the intifada against Israel which began late in 1987.

A huge Christmas tree was displayed in a store on the main Omar Moukhtar Street while the tiny Baptist congregation joined Western agency employees in Christmas carols.

At the Latin Patriarchate School, Father Jallil Awwad, the Catholic parish priest, greeted Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat on a Christmas visit.

"We used to have smaller celebrations in the past years," said Father Awwad, also the school principal.

"We never had the heart to really enjoy Christmas fully during the intifada. Now there is no more curfew, and everyone can come and go."

It was the biggest fuss the school, which has 1,000 students mostly Muslims, has ever made at Christmas time.

A huge Christmas tree stood in the front yard, bright paper lanterns and tinsel were strung across the walls. Six Santas gave Mr. Arafat a gift as a hand played the traditional song Jingle Bells.

Father Awwad said that even though some of his pupils' parents were Hamas supporters, "They like the education that we give here, and we have separate Islamic and Christian religion classes."

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. wants Mideast to help fund N. Korean plan

TOKYO (AFP) — The United States is seeking financial assistance from oil-producing countries in the Middle East to help North Korea replace its existing nuclear reactors, a news report said here Friday. "We have approached some countries in the Middle East about supporting the implementation of the agreed framework by contributions, either financial or in kind," U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Robert Gallucci told Japan's Kyodo News Service in an interview in Washington. North Korea signed an agreement with the United States in October in Geneva on replacing Pyongyang's graphite-moderated nuclear reactor system with light-water plants that produce less bomb-grade materials. Washington, in turn, agreed to coordinate a programme to fund the replacement reactors, as well as alternative fuel supplies. Mr. Gallucci led the U.S. delegation to the Geneva negotiations. The United States, Japan and South Korea agreed earlier this month to establish an international consortium to help North Korea convert the graphite reactor system, which will require funds of some \$4 billion.

World Bank approves Egypt irrigation loan

WASHINGTON (R) — The World Bank said Thursday it approved \$80 million in loans to assist Egypt's \$182.3 million irrigation improvement project serving 95,000 farmers in the northern Nile Delta. The World Bank money is made up of an International Development Association (IDA) credit of \$53.3 million and a \$26.7 million bank loan. "Egypt's water resources are limited and one of the project's objectives is to improve efficiency in water resources management by modernising the irrigation systems of small farmers in northern Egypt," said World Bank task manager Aiaz Khan in a statement. Three irrigation areas in the governorates of Beheira and Kafr Al Sheikh will be improved by installing control structures, measuring systems and mixing stations for the reuse of drainage. Pumps and pipes will be made available for the system of canals servicing small farmers, many of whom have little more than a hectare of land each. The loan has a maturity of 20 years and five years grace. The IDA credit has a maturity of 35 years with a 10-year grace period.

Iraqi Kurds clash for first time since August

ANKARA (R) — Fighting has broken out between supporters of rival Kurdish parties in northern Iraq, killing at least five people, Iraqi Kurdish sources said on Friday. "There were tensions in the Sulaymaniah region in the past couple of days — the first since the end of August and almost exactly a month after a settlement signed on Nov. 21," Saeed Dizaee, Ankara representative of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), told Reuters. "I think about five or so Peshmerga (guerrillas) were killed, but we are not sure yet whether this was a hot-headed dispute between Peshmergas or something to do with the commanders," Mr. Dizaee said. He said KDP leader Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), were expected to meet on Friday to investigate the fighting. The KDP and PUK have shared power since elections were held in 1992. Fighting between KDP and PUK factions, as well as religious groups from the Islamic Movement of Iraq (IMI), erupted in the three Kurdish-controlled provinces of northern Iraq in May and in August.

Ex-BCCI official paroled on health grounds

ABU DHABI (R) — A former Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) official serving a six-year jail term in the United Arab Emirates has been given parole on health grounds, Abu Dhabi News daily said on Friday. The paper quoted the Pakistani ex-official, Zafar Iqbal Chaudhary, 54, as saying he had been given parole because of health problems since a severe heart attack four years ago. Officials were not available to confirm that Mr. Chaudhary had left prison. Mr. Chaudhary was one of 12 ex-employees of BCCI sentenced in Abu Dhabi in June on charges related to the bank's spectacular collapse in 1991. Sentences ranged from three to 14 years. Over 30 bank officials were detained after the collapse. Most have been released and one died of a heart attack in custody. An Abu Dhabi court is now hearing appeals by convicted officials against the sentences and huge civil damages, as well as an appeal by the public prosecutor against the June rulings.

Desert sands run red as hunting season starts in Egypt

EL ARISH, Egypt (AFP) — Egypt's desert sands are running red with blood as convoys of rich Gulf Arabs arrive to hunt migrating gazelle, paying big bucks to circumvent a hunting ban.

"They kill and destroy everything," complained Sheikh Mubarak, a gamekeeper in Nakhli, a bedouin village in the Sinai desert.

"After the rains last week I could only find rats where normally the gazelle come to graze."

Poachers come "pretending to be tourists in the desert, in cars with servants, food, generators and cordless telecommunications even

radar," said Abdullah Hegawi, environment director in north Sinai at El Arish, about 580 kilometres south of Cairo.

Environmentalists say the survival of some species is now at stake, with guides estimating that 1,000 gazelle have been killed in just one area in the past five years.

"At least four groups have already come this year from Saudi Arabia and Qatar," he said.

In November he filmed three four-wheel-drive landrovers bringing Saudis with their dogs and hunting falcons.

He stopped them with the help of his association for the

protection of the environment and border guards.

Officially hunting is banned in the Sinai and the northwestern desert in the Marsa Matruh province bordering Libya.

But local residents, many of whom gladly accept huge payouts from the hunters, say that every year "the prince" return in November and December during the migration period.

Rich Gulf Arabs, who provide Egypt with a lot of aid, come to shoot white gazelle, rabbit and bustard or catch falcons. The understaffed gamekeepers are badly equipped to stop them.

"This year we didn't issue

one tourist permit for the desert," said Issam Badr, a senior official at the government environment agency in charge of monitoring the area.

"Last year we gave out about 30 permits but there was no hunting, but the rule was broken in more than half the cases," he added.

The governor of north Sinai, Munir Shaash, said he had not given out any permits either, but blamed authorities in "high places" saying the hunters were "often escorted by Egyptian soldiers."

But according to the mayor of Makhli Ali Fridi, the governor's office was issuing per-

mits up to 1991 in exchange for funds "to spend on developing the region and protecting the environment."

Two weeks ago in Marsa Matruh a Saudi Emir Fahd Ben Mohammad Ben Abdul Aziz, asked Governor Mohammad Zahir Abdul to rent a game reserve for \$250,000 a year, a regional spokesman Abdul Rahman Attia said.

The governor promised to pass the matter on to Cairo and offered him "two days of safari" in the province, but the emir asked for two weeks.

He has been staying in a hotel awaiting a reply, with a convoy of 29 vehicles camped

in the desert.

Hunters are often stopped with false permits or without licences.

A convoy of Kuwaitis and Qatari were stopped recently closed to the Sinai oasis on the Libyan border and expelled, a police source said. No legal procedures were taken.

"It is a difficult political question, but now we can't ignore it any longer because the survival of the animals is at stake," said Marwat Morosgayed, director general at Giza Zoo in Cairo.

In the past five years about 1,000 gazelles have been killed by 120 Gulf hunters in the Marsa Matruh province.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Pollards
17:30 Un Pour Tous
18:00 "Le Temple Du Karak"
18:30 Les Intrepides
19:00 News in French
19:15 Grands Galops
19:20 The Nanny: "The Christmas Story"
20:00 Innovations
20:30 Quantum Leap
21:10 Murder She Wrote
22:00 News in English
23:20 Feature film: "One Magic Christmas"
23:59 The Christmas Miracle: "Christmas Carols"
00:30 Major Dead
01:00 Christmas Ceremonies from the Vatican

PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr
06:23 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:35 Dhuhr
14:19 'Asr
16:41 Maghrib
18:04 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swifield, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590,
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be sunny with temperatures rising further and winds southeasterly light to moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. Amman 2 / 15

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Aqaba 8 / 21

Deserts 1 / 16

Jordan Valley 9 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 20 Humidity
readings: Amman 58 per cent,
Aqaba 47 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bahjat Bader 849362
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 602507
Dr. Sa'id Ali 788285
Dr. Yabya Abdul Salam 736072
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644045
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Akram Al Momani 248795
Alquds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Yahya Al Tariff 981520

Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 671701
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630221
Hotel Complaints 605900
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 63101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 634381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 6428146
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642363
Maibis, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 6647174
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Masdar Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 6612707
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7710103
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 7711126
Army, Marfa 8916105
Queen Alia Hospital 60240930
Amal Hospital 674153
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)903560
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princeza Basma Hospital (02)725555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)722725
Al Najaf Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

(Terminal 1)
05:45 Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
06:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:15 Aqaba (RJ)
06:25 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
06:35 New Delhi (RJ)
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
06:55 Colombo (RJ)
07:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
07:15 London, Berlin (RJ)
07:30 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
06:20 Vienna (OS)

15:45 Rome, Larnaca (AZ)

18:15 Dubai (EK)

19:30 Suma (IV)

19:45 Larnaca (CY)

20:20 Beirut (ME)

21:55 Paris, Damascus (AF)

22:00 Cairo (MS)

22:45 London (BA)

23:05 Athens (OA)

23:20 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

(Terminal 1)

06:25 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
07:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
07:35 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
07:45 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
07:55 London (RJ)
08:00 Cairo (RJ)
08:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
08:30 Larnaca (RJ)
08:45 Damascus (RJ)
08:55 Jeddah (RJ)
09:00 Beirut (RJ)
09:15 Colombo (RJ)
09:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
09:45 London, Berlin (RJ)
09:55 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
07:45 Beirut (ME)
08:15 Vienna (OS)
09:15 Dubai (EK)
09:30 Suma (IV)
09:45 Larnaca (CY)
10:00 Cairo (MS)
10:15 Damascus, Paris (AF)
06:20 Amsterdam (KL)

02:35 London (BA)

02:40 Athens (OA)

HUAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:10 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fil per kg

Apple 700-800
Banana 600
Banana (Mukammal) 650
Cabbage 220-120
Carrot 280-180
Cauliflower 450-300
Cauliflower (large) 300-200
Cucumbers (small) 350-250
Eggplant 370-240
Garlic 500-400
Grape Fruit 200-180
Lemon 280-180
Marrow (large) 250-180
Marrow (small) 400-300
Onion (green) 380-250
Onion (dry) 440-300
Orange 520-300
Pepper (hot) 540-400
Pepper (sweet) 540-400
Potato 300-200
Radish 240-180
Spinach 480-300
String Beans 1000-700
Tomato 500-200



His Majesty King Hussein confers Al Kawkab Medal of the First Order on visiting Malaysian Minister of Higher Education Suleiman Haji Daoud (Petra photo)

Malaysian minister ends visit today

AMMAN (J.T.) — Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education Suleiman Haji Daoud today ends his several-day visit to Jordan after meeting His Majesty King Hussein and holding talks with Jordanian government leaders.

Dr. Daoud, who Friday was accompanied by Jordanian officials on a visit to Petra, was received in audience by the King on Thursday and conveyed to him greetings from the Malaysian Monarch, and voiced Malaysia's support for the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, Jordan's peace efforts and the country's moderate policies under the leadership of the King and the Hashemite family.

Dr. Daoud also voiced his country's deep appreciation of the level of higher education in Jordan of which large numbers of Malaysian students are now benefitting. King Hussein conferred on the visiting Minister Al Kawkab Medal of the First Order in the presence of Chief of the Royal Court Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Minister of Higher Education Rafea Saoud.

Earlier Thursday Dr. Daoud and Dr. Saoud held official talks at the Ministry of Higher Education to chart plans for further promoting relations in educational and cultural fields.

Discussion covered mainly the exchange of scholarships to students from both countries, the exchange of publications and educational curricula, as well as visits by faculty to teach at Malaysian and Jordanian universities.

Dr. Saoud said after the talks that the two sides have decided to enrol additional numbers of Malaysian students at Jordanian universities to study Arabic language and Islamic religion.

The Malaysian Minister also met Education Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh and discussed educational cooperation.

He also visited the University of Jordan and discussed educational programmes and met Malaysian students studying there.

Malaysian students are studying at AL Al Bayt, Muta, Yarmouk and the University of Jordan.

Queen attends Rula Nabeel recital

AMMAN (J.T.) — The SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan Wednesday night presented a piano recital by Rula Nabeel at the Royal Cultural Centre under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, honorary chairperson of the SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan, to support SOS children throughout the Kingdom, according to a Royal Court statement.

Ms. Nabeel, a 1983 winner of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's Royal Endowment for Culture and Education scholarship to pursue advanced music studies in Germany, has given many highly acclaimed performances in various European cities.

At Wednesday night's recital, she played Mozart, Satie, Beethoven and Brahms and pieces by a young Jordanian composer, Tarek Younis.

Ms. Nabeel accompanied 11-year-old vocalist Raad Rizk in a performance of selected Christmas carols. In a tribute to all SOS children, Rula Nabeel and Raad Rizk presented a musical piece, "A Cry," composed by Tarek Younis, with the lyrics written by Raad Rizk.

SOS Jordan have completed several projects in Jordan to provide orphaned children with a healthy family environment and to promote their physical and emotional development and well being.

SOS projects educate and train their children and youth to become self-reliant and productive members of the community.

The SOS bakery and pastry shop generate income by producing and selling their products to consumers in the SOS villages and in Amman, and a well-equipped vocational centre trains SOS youth in carpentry and caters to private orders.

In addition to two children's villages in Amman and Aqaba, officially opened by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, who visit the children every Eid, SOS have established separate youth houses for boys and girls, and kindergartens and supermarkets in Amman and Aqaba.

Following the performance, Queen Noor spoke with the three artists and thanked them for their very high standard of musicianship, the Royal Court statement said. The Queen expressed her pride in them and their achievements, and looked forward to celebrating a great future with them, the statement said.

Queen Noor was received by President of SOS Jordan, Jafar Toukan, Vice President Amal Sajdi, National Director Lina Kopyt and members of the board, according to the statement.

JNRCS, Dutch Society to launch two-year programme in Maan

MAAN (Petra) — Mohammad Hadid, head of the Jordanian National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) said here Wednesday that his society, in cooperation with the Dutch Red Cross Society, will soon initiate a two-year programme in the Maan region for the benefit of the local residents.

Speaking at a ceremony for the inauguration of a laboratory at the society branch in Maan, Dr. Hadid said the programme, which would be financed by the Netherlands, would be launched at the villages of Sadafah, Rajef, Dalaa and Abu Mahtoub and it would entail providing primary health care for the local residents and some foodstuffs for the needy families.

Referring to the Maan branch as one of the most active among the JNRCS's branches around the country, Dr. Hadid said that the branch will soon be supplied by an X-ray unit and other necessities as well as additional beds and hearing aids for the needy patients.

Dr. Hadid announced the donation of JD 10,000 from the society to the Maan branch to help finance the construction of warehouses which would be let to earn an income for the society to finance part of its operations.

He also promised to supply the branch's clinic with additional equipment.

Dr. Hadid outlined the general services of the JNRCS and the medical services offered at its Al Hilal Hospital in Amman.

Government to raise vehicle insurance

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government plans to raise vehicle insurance rates by an average 33 per cent noting that insurance rates in neighbouring countries have also recently been hiked.

A statement Friday said that the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Federation of Jordanian Insurance Companies came to an agreement to raise the rate of compulsory insurance.

But the statement said that 60 per cent of the cars in Jordan which are privately owned will pay an increase of 25 per cent on their annual insurance premiums.

The decision for the increase followed a study of the rate of car accidents involving different categories of vehicles and in light of the recent insurance hikes in neighbouring countries, said the statement.

During a debate in Parliament over the performance of the insurance companies operating in Jordan and during discussions that preceded the endorsement of a law on insurance companies last May, the government had then said that reports that insurance rates would be increased were groundless.

The prime minister told the Lower House then that there was no truth to reports that premiums would be increased by 50 per cent and that the government was negotiating with the insurance companies over studies to better organise the insurance industry.

The announcement Friday was seen by some analysts as a way to appease the insurance companies which repeatedly complained that they were sustaining losses that forced them to demand that the government interfere otherwise they would stop issuing liability policies.

A total of 17 insurance companies have been operating in Jordan for the past 10 years and the government has since then allowed no new insurance company to enter the market.

According to the new arrangements announced Friday, the insurance companies are now forced to raise to JD7,500 from JD5,000 the sum paid in compensation for the death of an individual in a car accident, and to raise medical expense coverage to JD3,000 from JD2,000.

The maximum amount which an insurance company would pay for a single accident in compensation for death and material damage would be JD150,000 up from JD100,000.

Pricing dispute threatens cut in dairy products supply

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Ministry of Supply and dairy producers remained in a deadlock over the weekend in a dispute over prices, and prospects were unclear whether the dairies would make good a warning that they would stop producing yogurt and other milk products as of Wednesday unless they were allowed to raise prices.

The dairy owners complain that the prices of their products as set by the Ministry of Supply no longer reflect real cost of production and say that they are absorbing daily losses by maintaining their output. They also point out that the last time the authorities agreed to a rise in prices was in 1990 and that production costs, including prices of packaging materials, have gone up three or four times since then.

The dairy owners, who do not have an association of their own, have been engaged in negotiations with the Ministry of Supply since October, when they approached the ministry with a demand to raise prices. A committee set up by the ministry suggested last week that prices be raised nominally, but the dairies have rejected the recommendation saying that the proposed increase did not reflect the actual rise in production costs since 1990.

Omar Hourmai, general manager of the Danish Jordanian Dairy Company, said his factory, which produces about 30 tonnes of yogurt and labaneh in winter and about 40 tonnes in summer, would continue to suffer losses on a daily basis if it continued production of the milk products.

"The cost of plastic containers has gone up at least four times since 1990, and wages have also gone up," Mr. Hourmai told the Jordan Times. "We are not threatening to strike or any similar action when we say we would stop production on Dec. 28 if we are not allowed to raise prices. We only want to avoid losses and to realise our cost."

The proposed increase of five fils per 300 grammes and 10 fils per 500 grammes of yogurt is not acceptable, Mr. Hourmai said. "We have informed the ministry of our rejection of the suggested increase and have sought a higher increase," he said. He did not say how much increase the dairy owners were seeking.

Mr. Hourmai also argued that a proposed by the ministry that a new committee be set up to study the market once again would only lead to more losses for his company. "We have first approached the ministry in October, and it took them two months to come up with their findings while we suffered losses in the two months. If a new committee is set up, it would also take another two or three months while we continue to suffer losses."

"We need an immediate decision on the issue. Otherwise, we have no choice but to switch off our machinery on Dec. 28 and focus only on producing fruit juices until such time our just demand is met."

Officials said the Ministry of Supply was anxious not to allow any major increase in the prices of yogurt and other milk products if only because of the high consumption of dairy products by the low-income groups.

"Obviously, an increase in the prices of such items would only add to complaints that cost of living is rising in the country while earnings have remained largely stagnant," said an official who preferred anonymity. "The government is as anxious as anyone to resolve the crisis on a rational basis, but there is the issue of cost of living to take into consideration."

There are 10 major dairy firms in Jordan producing about 150 to 170 tonnes of milk products every day in winter and more than 200 tonnes in summer. But not everyone of them has made up their mind to stop production unless the prices are raised.

Jamal Abu Seneh, financial manager of the Jordan Dairy Company in Zarqa, said his company had not taken a final decision whether to suspend production. "It is a management decision to be taken in consultations with the shareholders," Mr. Abu Seneh told the Jordan Times.

Prince Ali celebrates 19th birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — H.R.H. Prince Ali Ben Al Hussein Friday celebrated his 19th birthday.

Born in Amman, on Dec. 23, 1975, the Prince was educated at the Islamic Scientific School, the American Community School and the Amman Baccalaureate School.

Later Prince Ali pursued his education in the United Kingdom and the United States.

On Dec. 19, Prince Ali graduated from the Military Academy at Sandhurst following one-year's training. The graduation was attended by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor.

In addition Prince Ali has had several military training courses with the Jordanian Armed Forces.



Jordan takes another stride in fertilizer production

By a Jordan Times staff reporter

AMMAN — Another major step has been taken towards turning Jordan into a major fertilizer producing country with the signing of a \$60 million contract to build a compound fertilizer plant at Aqaba.

A consortium of Japanese and French companies, Chiyoda and Kribs, will build the plant in 27.5 months starting January 1995 under a contract signed recently by the Nippon Jordan Fertilizer Company.

It is the second such project to be built in Jordan with foreign participation. The Indo-Jordanian chemical company, which will produce phosphoric acid at a \$120-million plant being built in Shidiyah, is the first one.

The Nippon Jordan Fertilizer Company is a joint venture between a Japanese group led by the National Federation of Agricultural Associations and including Mitsubishi Chemical Corporation, Asahi Industries Company and Mitsubishi Corporation and the Jordanian Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company.

As the name implies, the National Federation of Agricultural Associations is an umbrella organisation for the Japanese farming community and is directly linked to the use of fertilizers in the country.

The Japanese side would hold 60 per cent of the \$24 million equity of the Nippon Jordan Fertilizer Company and the Jordanian side will hold the rest.

After the signing of the contract to the Chiyoda-Kribs consortium, the equity holders are now negotiating financing for the plant. The Japanese share of the financing is expected to come from Tokyo's Eximbank while the Jordanian share is being raised by a local group led by the Arab Bank, said Mohammad Al Karaki, deputy director-general of the company.

Although the accord was signed last month, the 27.5 month deadline for handing over the completed project to the company by the builders begins only from the date on which a down payment is made.

In addition to the \$60 million turnkey project, there will be other local input into project before it starts producing an average of 300,000 tonnes of compound fertilizers and diammonium phosphate, said Mr. Karaki.

The entire production of the plant will be exported to Japan. The output of the Indo-Jordan chemical company will be bought by Indian importers.

The fertilizer plant will be located in a 55,000-square metre plot near the industrial complex of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company in Aqaba and will employ around 100 people in the initial stage after it is commissioned, said Mr. Karaki.

The area enjoys the status of a free zone, and therefore the plant will have all exemptions granted to firms operating in a free zone. The area where the Indo-Jordanian chemical plant is built is also designated a free zone.

The Aqaba plant will consume of 80,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid, nearly 40,000 tonnes of sulphuric acid and ammonia.

The joint ventures with Indian and Japanese companies come in line with a gradual Jordanian switch to producing and marketing fertilizers from the Kingdom's traditional exports of the raw material — rock phosphates — to adopt to the changing pattern in the international market.

The Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company, which collectively account for the bulk of Jordan's exports, are discussing several other similar projects with other companies.

Iraq assails Kuwaiti and Saudi policies

(Continued from page 12)

track," it added.

Russia, China and France have been calling for an easing of the sanctions since Baghdad recognised Kuwait's sovereignty last month, but the United States and Britain insist on full compliance with all other U.N. resolutions.

Al Thawra said Iraq was pinning hope on what it termed "The Russian whale," now aided by both France and China, and their efforts to isolate the United States on the Security Council.

WHAT'S GOING ON CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

- ★ Bani Hamida Christmas Display with a variety of small gift items at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Rahbow Street.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by Laila Kawash at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings on leather by Iraqi artist Rakan Dabbab at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.
- ★ Art exhibition by Ammar Khammash and Foad Mimi at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre).
- ★ Exhibition of works by Mahmud Obeidi at Darat Al Fann. Also showing an exhibition of portraits by Fahrelnissa Zeid and the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tamam Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.



Indian premier moves to mend congress before fresh elections

NEW DELHI (R) — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, freed of three ministers linked to scandals, is planning to reshuffle his cabinet to mend party divisions before crucial state polls, party leaders said Friday.

Mr. Rao sacked Health Minister B. Shankaranand, Food Minister Kalonath Rai and Junior Rural Development Minister Rameshwar Thakur Thursday.

Mr. Shankaranand and Mr. Thakur were linked to a \$1.3 billion stock market scandal in 1992 while Mr. Rai was accused of wrongdoing in a sugar import scam earlier this year.

All three had offered to resign last week but Mr. Rao handed the resignations to President Shankar Dayal Sharma Thursday.

"He has acted at last to save the congress from splitting," a senior minister told

Reuters, referring to rising pressure on Mr. Rao from within the party to rid the cabinet of tainted ministers and deprive the opposition of an electoral weapon.

Mr. Rai was indicated by an official inquiry which charged him with helping delay sugar imports for six months until last May. By that time world prices had soared, costing the government hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Shankaranand and Mr. Thakur were named in a parliamentary probe into the stock market scandal in which bankers and brokers colluded to siphon funds, mainly from government securities, to the then booming Bombay Stock Exchange.

The opposition, which paralysed parliament this week over its demands for action against scandal-tainted ministers, said it had forced the

ministers' exit and demanded Mr. Rao step down.

"Compromise is not confined to individuals any more. The entire Congress Party is corrupt," said Lal Krishan Advani, president of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. "The prime minister must resign to seek a fresh mandate."

Mr. Advani said corruption would be the opposition's main electoral plank in crucial polls in several states in February.

Mr. Rao needs to survive elections in Congress-ruled Maharashtra and Gujarat, as well as in opposition-ruled Bihar and Orissa states to keep his hold on the party. But Congress leaders were pessimistic about at least three of the states, saying they might scrape through in Maharashtra.

"Our main concern is infighting," said Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil.

"Without party unity nothing can be achieved."

He was referring to criticism of Mr. Rao's leadership by his rival, Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh, and Civil Supplies Minister A.K. Antony.

Last week, Mr. Antony offered to resign over Mr. Rao's handling of the two scandals. Newspapers said Mr. Singh had also offered to step down but there was no official confirmation.

Congress deputies said an early cabinet reshuffle could help Mr. Rao win them over.

Some senior cabinet ministers have criticised Finance Minister Mammohan Singh's economic reforms as a factor in the Congress Party's rout in recent state polls.

Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee was quoted by senior deputies as leading the chorus of criticism against Mr. Singh.



Mexican state and federal police remove road block and barbed wire blocking a road near Soyate, Chiapas. The road blocks were placed by Zapatista rebels who on Dec. 19 took up positions in 38 Chiapas towns (AFP photo)

Mexico rebels hide, but say they won't run

LARRAINZAR, Mexico (R) — Army troops forced Maya Indian rebels to take cover in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas Thursday but the guerrilla fighters said they would not be driven back into their jungle strongholds.

Hundreds of soldiers in a column of trucks and light tanks mounted with heavy machine guns rumbled northwards into the strategic central Chiapas town of Larrainzar while military patrols guarded against rebel movements elsewhere in the state.

The army column, led by two generals, was met by dozens of applauding town residents as they moved into Larrainzar's main square and regained control three days after it was occupied by guerrillas of the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

There was no fighting because Zapatista rebels posted on the outskirts of the town took cover when the army approached.

The Zapatistas occupied Larrainzar and several other Chiapas towns Monday after leaving their jungle bases and slipping through army lines, but the military has steadily regained control without either side firing a single bullet.

Guerrillas around Larrainzar told reporters late Wednesday that they would sidestep army advances while resisting any offensive to force them back into the dense Lacandon jungle.

"We are here to defend

our territory, we are not going back to the jungle," one young rebel leader, Lieutenant Nicodemus, said on a hillside on the edge of Larrainzar. "If the army messes with us, we will have to respond but the order is to avoid contact."

The Zapatistas' strategy is aimed at leading the army into a frustrating game of cat-and-mouse with the guerrillas by sidestepping any army advance and reappearing days later.

Hours before the army moved into Larrainzar, the rebels dug deep trenches into all the asphalt and dirt roads approaching the town, effectively slowing any military approach.

During their brief occupation, the Zapatistas looked to boost their support by holding open-air meetings with hundreds of Maya Indian peasants to explain their platform of indigenous rights, greater democracy and judicial and political reforms.

The Zapatistas launched their armed rebellion after a decade of preparations last New Year's Day by seizing several large (45 people were killed in the first 10 days of fighting. A ceasefire was agreed in mid-January and the rebels were trapped inside their jungle bases until late last week.

But, by penetrating the army cordon, they have established a presence in central and northeastern Chiapas and are working closely with peasant groups that have de-

clared themselves in peaceful rebellion against the ruling party, Governor Eduardo Robledo, whom they say stole August elections through fraud.

Many analysts question their ability to do little more than harass the government, arguing that any full-frontal attack on the army would be suicidal.

Both sides say they will not be the first to open fire. However, with rebel and army units now so close to each other and in continual movement, tensions are running high.

The crisis has already helped push Mexico's financial markets into chaos and handed President Ernesto Zedillo a major crisis just three weeks after he took power.

Both the stock market and the national currency have plummeted this week, increasing pressure on Mr. Zedillo to resolve the Chiapas issue by either stifling the uprising or forcing open peace negotiations.

Zapatista chiefs say talks are possible only if Mr. Robledo resigns as state governor and Zedillo recognises the parallel "rebel government" of Chiapas opposition leader Amado Avendaño.

"Mr. Zedillo has promised huge investment to tackle the crushing poverty of Chiapas' indigenous communities but has so far refused to bow to the Zapatistas' political demands."

Unarmed White House intruder arrested

WASHINGTON (R) — An unarmed homeless man slipped through an open gate onto the White House grounds Wednesday evening but was arrested seconds later, the Secret Service said late Thursday.

Secret Service spokesman Jaime Cagigas said there was no danger to President Bill Clinton at any time.

Wednesday's incident followed on the heels of four security incidents on or near the White House grounds since mid-September which have sparked fresh concerns

about security and the possible need to block off wider parts of one of Washington's most-visited tourist sites.

Mr. Cagigas noted the Secret Service handled about half a dozen cases of "fence-hoppers" and others trying to get onto the White House grounds each year.

He said the man, whose name was not immediately available, was arrested shortly after sauntering through the southwest gate of the White House compound which had opened to let a vehicle enter at about 6 p.m. est (2300 GMT).

He said the man had been interviewed extensively and would be charged with unlawful entry.

"There was no threat at all against the president. He was unarmed. There wasn't any violence," Mr. Cagigas said adding the man appeared to have no particular motive for his act.

Another homeless being shot by police on the sidewalk in front of the White House Tuesday, Mr. Corniel had confronted and threatened police with a hunting knife.

Looting follows Burundi ethnic clashes

BUJUMBURA (R) — Looting broke out in abandoned parts of Burundi's capital Bujumbura where up to 30 people were killed in ethnic clashes between Hutus and Tutsis this week, but authorities said Friday calm was being restored.

"Now is not the time to count the dead," said Appolinaire Sahabo, administrative chief of the troubled Bwiza suburb where most of the violence has been concentrated.

"My priority is to make the Hutus and foreigners who abandoned their houses and goods which risk being destroyed by criminals to return," he added.

Bujumbura Mayor Pic Ntanyankundiye told state radio late Thursday it was calm enough for people to return to Bwiza to guard their houses and added:

"For those who may still be afraid, I would like to say that administrative and security officials from Bwiza will pick them up and accompany them to their homes."

Dozens of government troops patrolled Bwiza, allowing traffic to enter the northwest district but not permitting out people trying to flee in cars piled with their possessions, witnesses said.

Outside Bwiza, markets opened and taxis were back on the street after a dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed from Wednesday night appeared to have helped in restoring calm.

On Thursday, the U.N. Security Council called for a halt to violence in Burundi, fearing a repeat of the mass killings that gripped neighbouring Rwanda earlier this year.

A statement expressed concern over "the escalation of violence in Burundi, both in Bujumbura and in the countryside, which threatens to further destabilise an already fragile situation and could endanger the stability of the sub-region."

The battle of the Nordic Santa Claus

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Everyone knows that Santa Claus lives at the North Pole. But just where Father Christmas has his home is a matter of dispute among the Nordic countries of Sweden, Greenland, Finland and Norway.

Gesunda, Sweden (250 kilometres northwest of Stockholm) claims to be the year-round home of Santa. According to Santa World, Santa chose the Gesunda countryside for his permanent residence, after decades of searching for the ideal place to live.

Here Santa keeps a house, a workshop, and his animals — reindeer, of course. Visitors can stroll through the tree-lined park and small alleys, where store windows display figurines from Swedish fairytales.

In the middle of the park stands the Home of Santa Claus. Inside, hundreds of brightly wrapped presents are strewn about, waiting to be delivered to all the good little boys and girls of the world.

At Santa's workshop, where dozens of elves scurry about, a large wooden sleigh is parked outside. Little visitors climbing onto its plush red velvet are easily taken far, far away to fantasyland.

In Nuuk, Greenland, Santa's workshop and post office are also bustling with activity these days, answering at least 125,000 letters from over 100 countries. (The jolly old fellow's holiday home in neighbouring Umannaq is pretty quiet this time of year.)

Santa's very own post office handles all the mail, and post masters around the world make sure that even the letters without postage stamps get delivered!

Warm and cozy on the inside, the post office boasts the world's highest mail box — a six metre high replica of a Danish letterbox, chock-full of hopeful letters, all beginning "Dear Santa..."

The letters come from all over the world. One Filipino girl asked Santa if he liked his job, while a group of Danish convicts wrote a song and asked Santa to help them escape from prison.

Many Japanese students even write to Santa in Nuuk, lamenting the pressures put on them by their parents and asking for advice. "My dad wants me to study economics but I don't want to. What do I do?" asked one university student.

'Hurd set to quit in 1995'

LONDON (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd is set to stand down from the Conservative government in the middle of next year, said Friday's Daily Telegraph.

But before he leaves, Mr. Hurd is eager to ensure the safe withdrawal of British troops from Bosnia, and to establish an orderly debate on Europe in the Tory party, said the paper, which carried an opinion piece of Mr. Hurd setting out the government's European stance.

In it Hurd confirmed that Britain favoured developing the Western European Union as the "European pillar" of NATO and called for strengthened ties with European allies, especially France.

The changed strategic landscape since the fall of the Berlin Wall had raised new questions, said Mr. Hurd.

"Some of the answers remain the same. NATO will remain the bedrock of our security in the future, as it has been in the past," he said.

"But there is good reason to build up the Western European Union, as the European pillar of NATO," he added. "There is a clear case from our own point of view for strengthening our ties with our European allies and especially with France."

Mr. Hurd, 65, who has been in the government since 1979, is said to be determined to return to the backbenches before the next general election, having already postponed his departure at least once at Mr. Major's request.

Itemising other aims, Mr. Hurd said: "We shall aim to

New York subway blast suspect 'planned more'

NEW YORK (R) — A badly burned computer consultant was arrested Thursday for firebombing a packed subway train and law enforcement sources said the explosion was the first of several he had planned to terrorise New York City into paying extortion.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton announced the arrest of Edward Leary, 49, an unemployed computer expert from Scotch Plains, New Jersey, saying he was the bomber whose crude incendiary device exploded on a train packed with Christmas shoppers in the Wall Street district Wednesday.

Forty-five people were injured, four critically, including Mr. Leary who was covered with burns on almost half his body. The bomb — a mayonnaise jar filled with gasoline with a timing device igniter — set off flames that turned passengers on the train into human torches.

Law enforcement sources told Reuters police discovered notes and diagrams in

Mr. Leary's house that showed he had planned to trigger more explosions before demanding a huge ransom from the city to stop.

"He wanted to plant a few bombs first to let them (the Transit Authority which operates the city's subways) know he was serious and then he was going to extort money," one source close to the case said.

"We found pages and pages of rantings in his house. He hated the system," the source added.

Also found were bomb-making materials including a manual on how to make firebombs.

Police sources said that the Wednesday firebombing was the second time in a week Mr. Leary had struck. They said he was responsible for a firebomb device that went off in a Harlem train that injured two teenagers, including one seriously.

Original reports of that incident had suggested that the device was made by one of the students who was burned in a science class but she had adamantly denied it.

Chinese hijackers overpowered

BEIJING (R) — A Chinese man armed with a petrol bomb was overpowered and arrested Friday after he tried to hijack to Taiwan an airliner carrying 52 other passengers and 11 crew, a local official said.

The Soviet-made YAK-42 took off from Xiamen on a flight to Nanjing at 1.13 p.m. (0513 GMT) and the hijacker tried to force the pilot to fly to Taiwan while the plane was in airspace above Fuzhou, capital of Fujian province, said the official who refused to be identified.

The man threatened to set alight a bottle of petrol and demanded the plane fly to Taiwan, the official said by telephone from Xiamen, 740 (R) south of Beijing on the coast of Fujian opposite the Nationalist-ruled island.

The pilot agreed to fly to Taiwan, he said. As the plane flew toward the island, someone on the plane punched the hijacker, knocking him to the floor where he was overpowered, the official said.

Details of the fight were unclear and it was not known if the man was overpowered by the crew or passengers.

Taiwan state radio said the island's aviation authorities had received a hijack signal from an airliner approaching from China.

The plane changed its course and gained height as it approached Taiwan but did not cross into Taiwan airspace, the radio said. "The mainland flight which made a detour emitted a 7500 hijack signal," it said.

After the hijacker was overpowered, the plane returned to Xiamen where it landed at the airport at 2.45 p.m. (0645 GMT), the official said.

Police arrested and took away the lone hijacker, whose identity was not known, he said.

No injuries were reported among the other 52 passengers and 11 crew aboard the plane, a commercial flight on lease to one of China's many regional airlines from the China General Aviation Corp, he said.

"An incident has occurred," an official has occur-

red," an official of the Xiamen Airport Police Department said by telephone. "But I cannot reveal anything."

The Civil Aeronautics Administration in Beijing declined to comment.

Twelve planes have been hijacked from China to Taiwan since April 1993. The island is separated from China by 230 kilometres of the Taiwan Strait.

The last plane hijacked was in June 1994.

China and Taiwan, rivals since the Nationalists fled to the island after losing the Chinese Civil War in 1949, agreed late this year on terms for the return of hijackers after Beijing conceded Taipei reserve the right to keep some hijackers if it finds they have valid political or religious motives.

Hijackers in China can face a maximum penalty of death.

However, both sides agreed that any hijacking that did not leave its own territory's airspace would be handled solely by local authorities.

Hijackers in China can face a maximum penalty of death.

Brinkley weds millionaire on mountaintop

TELLURIDE, Colorado (R) — Supermodel Christie Brinkley schussed down the sunny slopes of a Rocky Mountain resort in a cream-coloured mohair dress Thursday to marry the man with whom she survived a helicopter crash earlier this year.

Brinkley, who divorced pop star Billy Joel last August, was wedded to millionaire oil heir and developer Ricky Taubman at Telluride's mid-mountain lodge in the U.S. west in front of hundreds of spectators dressed in 1930s-era ski outfits. Under sunny skies, the couple skied to the wedding site from the resort's top of the world lift overlooking Bear Creek Pass at about 12,000 feet (3,600 metres) above sea level.

"If you're going to marry a beautiful woman it better be in a beautiful place," Mr. Taubman said. Dozens of uninvited guests looked on from a respectful distance in this posh resort town where celebrities are more the norm than the rarity. "They (the wedding couple) are local royalty and are treated as such," said Tricia Bradley, a Telluride resident who watched the wedding. The couple celebrated the ceremony at a reception following the wedding but did not reveal their honeymoon destination. Last winter the longtime model, 40, and Mr. Taubman, 46, survived the crash of his helicopter while on a heli-skiing trip at Telluride along with four other passengers, who also survived. Brinkley, who was the inspiration for Joel's hit song Uptown Girl, has a daughter with him and Mr. Taubman has a son from a previous marriage.

Both sides say they will not be the first to open fire. However, with rebel and army units now so close to each other and in continual movement, tensions are running high.

The crisis has already helped push Mexico's financial markets into chaos and handed President Ernesto Zedillo a major crisis just three weeks after he took power.

Both the stock market and the national currency have plummeted this week, increasing pressure on Mr. Zedillo to resolve the Chiapas issue by either stifling the uprising or forcing open peace negotiations.

Zapatista chiefs say talks are possible only if Mr. Robledo resigns as state governor and Zedillo recognises the parallel "rebel government" of Chiapas opposition leader Amado Avendaño.

"Mr. Zedillo has promised huge investment to tackle the crushing poverty of Chiapas' indigenous communities but has so far refused to bow to the Zapatistas' political demands."

LOS ANGELES (R) — The films Forrest Gump and Pulp Fiction took top honours in nominations for the 52nd annual Golden Globe Awards announced by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Forrest Gump had seven nominations including best actor for Tom Hanks while Pulp Fiction received six including best actor for John Travolta and best director for Quentin Tarantino. The Golden Globes, to be presented in Beverly Hills on Jan. 21, are seen as a harbinger of who will win Hollywood's most prestigious awards, the Oscars. These are presented in late March.

Tarantino, whose black comedy of Los Angeles hoodlums and hit men earned almost \$60 million at the U.S. box office, earlier this year won the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival in France. In recent weeks the upstart filmmaker picked up top director awards from the Los Angeles and New York Film Critics Associations and the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. Pulp Fiction also gained Tarantino a Golden Globe for best screenplay. Samuel Jackson won a best supporting actor nomination for his role as a Bible-bashing thug and Uma Thurman best support-

actor nomination for his role as a Bible-bashing thug and Uma Thurman best supporting actress for a gangster moll. The movie was also nominated for best picture in the drama category. Forrest Gump, the Paramount Pictures release about a simpleton's brushes with history, was nominated for best picture-drama. Robin Wright received a nomination for best actress. Gary Sinise for best supporting actor, Robert Zemeckis for best director, Eric Roth for best screenplay and Alan Silverman for best original score.

Sino-foreign marriages rising 22% a year

BEIJING (R) — Marriages between Chinese and foreigners have been rising at an average of 22 per cent a year in Beijing since 1982, with most wedding for love and no longer for money, the Xinhua News Agency said Monday. Since a registration centre for multi-national marriages was set up in Beijing in 1982, a total of 2,387 Beijing residents have wed foreigners.

Xinhua quoted the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs as saying. The number of such marriages has been growing at a rate of 22 per cent a year since 1982 — when there were only 120 such couples, it said. Most overseas partners are from Japan, the United States, France, Russia and Korea, the bureau said.

"Soweto is the richest township, but most of the residents are poor nonetheless," Fr. Lafont said. "When they can afford presents, they tend to think useful and buy such things as new clothes for the family."

"Christmas here is different from Europe," he said, because it falls in the middle of the southern hemisphere summer and the annual holidays, when most of the country practically closes down for two or three weeks.

Some of the black population return to their rural homes, while most of the whites — flock to the beaches of the Indian and Atlantic oceans.

Soweto readies for 1st post-apartheid Christmas

SOWETO, South Africa (AFP) — The black township of Soweto, launch pad of the anti-apartheid movement and the site of the 1976 riots that eventually led to the demise of white rule, readied this week to celebrate its first Christmas under democracy.

"It will be a Christmas of peace, but there are some contrasts," said Emmanuel Lafont, a French Catholic priest whose parish, for more than a decade, has been the small Church of Saint Phillip in the centre of this sprawling city of 3.5 million souls abutting Johannesburg.

Fr. Lafont recalled the "Black Christmases" of the National Party era, when "people boycotted shops and were banned by anti-apartheid organisations from celebrating Christmas."

"People then," Fr. Lafont told AFP, "were afraid of political violence inside their own communities. What remains today is tension arising from crime, poverty and the disillusionment of the jobless."

Officials put the unemployment rate in Soweto, a local brewery began last

township, at 60 per cent. "The threat of the 'Tsotsi' is permanent," the priest said, referring to the young armed black gangsters who bedevil South Africa's black townships and beyond.

The crime rate in Soweto — short for South Western Townships — has doubled in the past decade, according to Fr. Lafont's estimate, and things have not improved since the historic elections in April that brought blacks to power for the first time.

Before the election, "the frustrations of the young were channelled to political issues," Fr. Lafont said — now that the struggle for political freedom is over, many are turning to crime.

A crime rate that rockets after nightfall had, in the past, helped ensure that Christmas celebrations remained traditional, with people staying at home with their families.

This year, despite the fear of crime, the city of Johannesburg has planned something different.

A "Christmas Extravaganza" in cooperation with a local brewery began last

week with a spectacular show of fireworks in Dobsonville, one of the poorest areas of Soweto.

More fireworks and laser shows — with beams visible from 15 kilometres (9.4 miles) around — are planned for Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

"We wanted to bring the true Christmas spirit back to Soweto," event organiser Michael Tellingier told The Star newspaper.

The aim this year, added Soweto resident and rights campaigner Tsebo Lithele, is to "wipe out all Black Christmases of the apartheid era."

The streets of the township have been given a facelift and the "beats" — the barbecues that are a must at all South African outings — are waiting to be lit for an all-day party on Christmas day.

Beer, the favourite tipple of South Africans regardless of race or political affiliation, "will flow on Sunday and everybody will dance," said the 32-year-old Lithele, a clerk at a Soweto clinic.

"Almost everyone has united for the Christmas celebration", added Victor



Chechen volunteers load a truck on the way to Petropavlovskaya (20-km north-east of Grozny) where heavy fighting has been registered during the last days. Rebel Chechen leader

Dzhokhar Dudayev called Wednesday for international pressure on Moscow to halt its offensive on his breakaway republic but Russian troops pursued their attacks (AFP photo)

Unhappy Russian troops man Chechenya borders

SERNOVODSK, Russia (R) — The Russian colonel glanced wearily at his bedraggled troops manning a checkpoint on the border with breakaway Chechenya and spat in disgust.

"It is absolutely clear to me that this is a senseless war. I was in Afghanistan and I know what it means to fight a whole nation," he said.

Many of the ordinary Russian soldiers guarding the roads leading into Chechenya from the neighbouring western Republic of Ingushetia seem less than content with their lot.

The conscripts, who spend the night in freezing foxholes near the road, can only gaze enviously at their companions from the elite police Spetsnaz troops who are rotated regularly and sleep in warm tents.

The young soldiers, who could be seen shivering outside in sub-zero temperatures, were distinctly unhappy.

"We live in complete darkness here. We don't see the newspapers. We don't know what is happening," said Andrei, a 19-year-old infantryman.

As he spoke, Russian troops in heavy trucks drove past in the direction of the capital Grozny, under heavy attack from air force jets.

Two attack helicopters roared overhead in pursuit.

The sound of distant explosions could be heard continually from the east. One officer said they were blasts from tank and Howitzer rounds.

A few kilometres farther north, Russian troops on one of the side-roads leading to

Grozny were stopping every car and checking for weapons.

"Last night, a military truck going through a field near the road, blew up on a Chechen mine and a colonel was killed. The driver lost his legs," said a Spetsnaz soldier.

An army major at the checkpoint turned away reporters after five minutes, saying he supported the Kremlin's decision to send in troops to crush Chechenya's three-year independence bid.

"It should have been done a long time ago. We will sort things out here for sure," he said as more distant explosions could be heard.

The Russian soldiers must also deal with a hostile local population.

"We did not want this but once the war is here we have to fight. We know what we

are dying for," said Sait, a 45-year-old Chechen in the village of Sernovodsk, just inside the neighbouring region of Ingushetia.

Sait, rubbing his unshaven chin, said local men were going out on night raids to harass the Russian troops.

"Even if they take Grozny, the soldiers will have to leave their tanks to urinate and then they will be killed," he said.

The local mufti, or religious leader, said he and the other elders in the village fully supported the holy war which Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev had declared on Moscow.

"We have only one choice. To win or to die," said one elderly man as he listened to the mufti delivering a prayer condemning the Russian troops.

Italy begins search for way out of crisis

ROME (R) — President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro began the search for a way out of Italy's deep political crisis Friday with ousted Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi piling the pressure on him to opt for a snap election.

Mr. Scalfaro, who must decide whether to dissolve parliament or seek a possible successor to Mr. Berlusconi, started formal consultations by meeting one of his two surviving predecessors as head of state, 86-year-old Giovanni Leone.

An official statement said Mr. Scalfaro would meet former President Francesco Cossiga at five p.m. (1600 GMT).

The crisis then enters the freezer for Christmas. Mr. Scalfaro's soundings on how to end the turmoil resume on Dec. 27 when he will start talks with speakers of both houses of parliament and political party leaders.

Mr. Berlusconi, his centre-right government wrecked just seven months into office, quit Thursday rather than face defeat in a vote in parliament on three on-confidence motions, one of them sponsored by his rebel coalition partner the Northern League.

The 58-year-old media mogul said Friday that he had given Mr. Scalfaro clear message at his resignation meeting that Italy must return to the ballot box fast and leave him as caretaker prime minister in the run-up to polls.

"I said very clearly that I would consider it a mistake to change the composition of the government for the brief period which separates us from these necessary elections," Mr. Berlusconi told a news conference.

Mr. Scalfaro, 76, is the ultimate arbiter in Italian political crises as head of state.

He is widely believed to oppose elections only nine months into parliament's five-year term and to prefer first to try to form a government. Italy's 54th since World War II, from the forces in the current legislature.

Outgoing Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, a League moderate who has openly dissented from party leader

Umberto Bossi's break with Mr. Berlusconi, said Friday that Mr. Scalfaro thought snap elections "would be a catastrophe".

"You can't dissolve parliament because a government falls," Mr. Maroni told reporters. "An innovative, new institutional solution must be found that will allow a new government to be born."

"Something has got to be pulled out of the hat," he said.

Mr. Berlusconi's stormy coalition between his Forza Italia party, the federalist League and the far right National Alliance stormed to triumph in general elections in March under a new, mainly majority system.

Mr. Bossi's defection, branded a betrayal of voters by Mr. Berlusconi, has sharply divided the League, with Mr. Maroni leading a large group opposed to his plan to go into a government that would involve the ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left.

Mr. Berlusconi made clear he hoped the internal tension would eventually topple Mr. Bossi.

"I hope the many merits of the League can continue to be appreciated by people," if the League changes its political direction, "it there's a review that could also lead to a change of leadership," he said.

Mr. Bossi told Italian television he had brought down Mr. Berlusconi because "it was necessary to stop this kind of Peronism, this kind of little personal dictatorship."

Mr. Berlusconi, asked to respond to the remark, told the news conference: "Bossi must be talking about Peroni beer, it's the only Peronism he knows about". Peroni is a popular brand of Italian beer.

The current parliament is seriously splintered and few political analysts believe any alternative coalition to Mr. Berlusconi's shattered alliance could last long.

One alternative, a broad-based transitional government led by a non-partisan premier, had strong backing in an opinion poll published Friday. The Directa Institute said 72.8 per cent of respondents who expressed an opinion favoured the idea.

At Panmunjom, the only crossing point in the tense Korean border, North Korea Thursday handed over the body of U.S. army Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon, killed when his helicopter was downed last Saturday after straying into North Korean territory.

The pilot of the helicopter, Bobby Hall, was captured by the North Koreans.

Pyongyang has said the helicopter was on a spy mission. It was still questioning Hall, who is from Bookersville, Florida.

On Friday, the chief of staff of the North Korean army, Marshal Choe Kwang, called for vigilance in the face of "reckless" acts by enemy forces.

The enemy continuously strains the situation in our country by conducting reckless commotions and military exercises against us," Marshal Choe said at a ceremony to mark the third anniversary of Kim Jong-Il's elevation to supreme military commander, broadcast on official Pyongyang Radio.

"We must keenly watch the enemy's aggression and war manoeuvres, and must maintain high vigilance and be in full combat readiness so we can cope with any contingency."

Hang Chang-On, a senior North Korean diplomat to the United Nations in Geneva Thursday accused the United States of carrying out 200 "espionage activities" against his country in November alone, by planes and helicopters doing aerial reconnaissance.

Mr. Han said his country hoped to resolve the problem of releasing the airman on a "humanitarian basis" but would have to have a "thorough investigation of the incident."

White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers said shortly after the return of Hilemon's body Thursday that President Bill Clinton regretted the downing of the OH-58 helicopter.

"It was unnecessary. I think, in our view. And we're hopeful that the North Koreans will return Chief Warrant Officer Hall shortly," she said.

"I think we're hopeful and we're certainly calling on the North Koreans to let him go in time for Christmas."

The body of Hilemon had arrived at Travis Air Force Base in California near San Francisco where the military planned an autopsy to determine the cause of death, U.S. military spokesman Coles said.

U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson, who brokered the return of Hilemon's body and brought it back to South Korea, left Seoul for Washington Friday to report on his five-day trip to President Clinton.

Mr. Richardson, who acted as Mr. Clinton's envoy after

planning, was named unification minister, responsible for relations with Communist North Korea. The holder of the post automatically becomes one of two deputy prime ministers.

Former Defence Minister Kwon Young-Hae will head the Agency for National Security Planning, the powerful internal security agency, and Lee Yang-Ho, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was named defence minister.

Finance Minister Park Jae-Yoon was transferred to trade minister and the ambassador to the United States, Han Seung-Soo, was named presidential chief secretary in place of Park Kwang-Yong.

The presidential spokesman said Mr. Kim introduced into his cabinet new figures to implement his crusade to boost South Korea's international competitiveness and eradicate corrupt practices.

The shake-up had been expected since early this month

when Mr. Kim proposed a bill to merge and streamline major government ministries and cut dozens of high-ranking posts.

Parliament earlier Friday passed the reorganisation bill to pave the way for the sweeping cabinet changes.

The bill, under which four major economic ministries would be merged into two new ministries, was passed by 171 votes to 79, a parliamentary spokesman said.

The highlight of the reorganisation is the merger of the Finance Ministry and the Economic Planning Board, which was in charge of drawing up budget plans. The Construction and Transportation Ministries were also merged.

Mr. Kim's proposal to reorganise the government, which will cut posts of 32 senior officials, including two ministers and three vice-ministers, has touched off intense debate in parliament in the past two weeks.

Analysts said Friday's shake-up appeared also aimed at giving his cabinet a facelift following a series of corruption scandals and disasters, including the collapse in October of a bridge in central Seoul which killed 32 people.

In South Korea, a president often reshuffles his cabinet when seeking to boost flagging public confidence in the government.

Truce delayed; Bosnian Serbs say they already observe it

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Bosnian Serbs delayed an official ceasefire with Muslims for 24 hours until noon (1100 GMT) Saturday but said they had already ordered their forces to stop fighting Friday.

U.N. envoy Yasushi Akashi was still negotiating the text of an agreement with the Serbs at their Pale headquarters outside Sarajevo when the Friday noon deadline for the ceasefire passed.

But Mr. Akashi emerged shortly afterwards with a document signed by Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his army commander, General Ratko Mladic, and told reporters: "Our enormous efforts have resulted in a happy outcome."

He read a text declaring "a general ceasefire along all lines of confrontation which will take place at 1200 hours on Dec. 24."

Mr. Akashi left for Sarajevo to sign up the Muslim-led Bosnian government while Mr. Karadzic said: "As far as we are concerned, the ceasefire has already taken effect."

The United Nations and Serb and Muslim military commanders have until Jan. 1

to negotiate a four-month "cessation of hostilities" which will lead to the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers between the two sides.

The agreement crowns a private mediation effort by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter who was called in by Bosnian Serbs this week to break the deadlock in efforts to end almost 33 months of war in Bosnia.

The ceasefire agreement appeared to have been simplified with serious obstacles to an overall agreement removed.

There was no mention of Serb demands that Muslim forces withdraw from a demilitarised zone outside Sarajevo or of the status of a disputed big power peace plan.

Mr. Karadzic said after signing: "Our mutual intention is to conclude a final peace agreement. I think we are very close to that and I hope the international community will make every endeavour to make a final peace treaty and stabilise the Balkans."

The ceasefire agreement guaranteed the freedom of movement of U.N. convoys and safety for U.N. personnel and the prompt, unconditional release of prisoners of war.

Mr. Akashi went to Pale Friday morning to discuss difficulties over the inclusion of the status of the big power peace plan in the agreement. He appeared in the end to have settled for less.

Serbs regard the plan as dividing Bosnia almost equally between themselves and a federation of Muslims and Croats — as a starting point for peace negotiations.

The Bosnian government insists it should be the basis of a peace settlement.

A threat to the truce is that the Carter and U.N. proposals do not include Croatian Serbs and rebel Muslims who are fighting government forces in the Bihac enclave in the northwest.

This is the only part of the country where serious fighting is still taking place and there is no guarantee the ceasefire would stop it, even though the Bosnian Serb forces would have to cease involvement.

The government 5th Corps defending Bihac said heavy snow had slowed fighting although Serb shelling had continued.

Corps spokesman Damir Mizdich said by telephone that Serbs were reinforcing their troops around Bihac.

"I doubt very much that the ceasefire will work. We assess it as just another Karadzic game," he added.

Mr. Karadzic is still likely to press for the withdrawal of Muslim forces from Mount Igman, west of Sarajevo, where they are guarding the only free road to the mainly Muslim Bosnian capital.

Mr. Akashi said Thursday that the Igman problem "should have been settled a long time ago but we are still stuck on that issue that darkens the prospects of solving the other issues."

The United Nations and the Bosnian rivals refused to be deterred by an attack on a Sarajevo market Thursday in which two men were killed and seven people wounded.

Peacekeepers said Friday that examinations of debris showed that tank shells rather than mortar bombs were probably responsible but that they could not determine which side had fired them.

However, U.N. spokesman Gary Coward said it was "unlikely" that government forces had fired the rounds.

S. Korea's Kim carries out major cabinet reshuffle

SEOUL (R) — South Korean president Kim Young-Sam Friday made sweeping cabinet changes, replacing Foreign Minister Han Sung-Joo and a dozen other members, a presidential spokesman said.

Mr. Han will be replaced by Gong Ro-Myung, a career diplomat who is now ambassador to Japan.

In the biggest cabinet shake-up since taking office in February last year, Mr. Kim dismissed Defence Minister Rhee Byoung-Tae, Trade Minister Kim Chul-Su and Interior Minister Choi Hyung-Woo.

Deputy Prime Minister Hong Jae-Hyung, who is also the economic planning minister, will head the powerful finance and economics board. This was created by the merger of the Finance Ministry and Economic Planning Board under a government reorganisation plan.

Kim Deok, the head of the Agency for National Security

Planning, was named unification minister, responsible for relations with Communist North Korea. The holder of the post automatically becomes one of two deputy prime ministers.

Former Defence Minister Kwon Young-Hae will head the Agency for National Security Planning, the powerful internal security agency, and Lee Yang-Ho, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was named defence minister.

Finance Minister Park Jae-Yoon was transferred to trade minister and the ambassador to the United States, Han Seung-Soo, was named presidential chief secretary in place of Park Kwang-Yong.

The presidential spokesman said Mr. Kim introduced into his cabinet new figures to implement his crusade to boost South Korea's international competitiveness and eradicate corrupt practices.

The shake-up had been expected since early this month

when Mr. Kim proposed a bill to merge and streamline major government ministries and cut dozens of high-ranking posts.

Parliament earlier Friday passed the reorganisation bill to pave the way for the sweeping cabinet changes.

The bill, under which four major economic ministries would be merged into two new ministries, was passed by 171 votes to 79, a parliamentary spokesman said.

The highlight of the reorganisation is the merger of the Finance Ministry and the Economic Planning Board, which was in charge of drawing up budget plans. The Construction and Transportation Ministries were also merged.

Mr. Kim's proposal to reorganise the government, which will cut posts of 32 senior officials, including two ministers and three vice-ministers, has touched off intense debate in parliament in the past two weeks.

Analysts said Friday's shake-up appeared also aimed at giving his cabinet a facelift following a series of corruption scandals and disasters, including the collapse in October of a bridge in central Seoul which killed 32 people.

In South Korea, a president often reshuffles his cabinet when seeking to boost flagging public confidence in the government.

Christmas nears, but no word on pilot in N. Korea

SEOUL (R) — U.S. military officials got no response from North Korea Friday to a request for a border meeting to arrange the return of a captured U.S. army helicopter pilot by Christmas, a U.S. spokesman said.

"We, of course, are seeking a meeting at Panmunjom but the North has not responded to our request," said Jim Coles, a spokesman for the U.S. military in South Korea.

"We will be ready for talks whenever the North accepts the offer."

Military officials in Seoul said U.S. military officers had made the request for talks through North Korean officers at the border hamlet of Panmunjom who said they would pass it on to the leadership in Pyongyang.

At Panmunjom, the only crossing point in the tense Korean border, North Korea Thursday handed over the body of U.S. army Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon, killed when his helicopter was downed last Saturday after straying into North Korean territory.

The pilot of the helicopter, Bobby Hall, was captured by the North Koreans.

Pyongyang has said the helicopter was on a spy mission. It was still questioning Hall, who is from Bookersville, Florida.

On Friday, the chief of staff of the North Korean army, Marshal Choe Kwang, called for vigilance in the face of "reckless" acts by enemy forces.

The enemy continuously strains the situation in our country by conducting reckless commotions and military exercises against us," Marshal Choe said at a ceremony to mark the third anniversary of Kim Jong-Il's elevation to supreme military commander, broadcast on official Pyongyang Radio.

"We must keenly watch the enemy's aggression and war manoeuvres, and must maintain high vigilance and be in full combat readiness so we can cope with any contingency."

Hang Chang-On, a senior North Korean diplomat to the United Nations in Geneva Thursday accused the United States of carrying out 200 "espionage activities" against his country in November alone, by planes and helicopters doing aerial reconnaissance.

Mr. Han said his country hoped to resolve the problem of releasing the airman on a "humanitarian basis" but would have to have a "thorough investigation of the incident."

White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers said shortly after the return of Hilemon's body Thursday that President Bill Clinton regretted the downing of the OH-58 helicopter.

"It was unnecessary. I think, in our view. And we're hopeful that the North Koreans will return Chief Warrant Officer Hall shortly," she said.

"I think we're hopeful and we're certainly calling on the North Koreans to let him go in time for Christmas."

The body of Hilemon had arrived at Travis Air Force Base in California near San Francisco where the military planned an autopsy to determine the cause of death, U.S. military spokesman Coles said.

U.S. Congressmen Bill Richardson, who brokered the return of Hilemon's body and brought it back to South Korea, left Seoul for Washington Friday to report on his five-day trip to President Clinton.

Mr. Richardson, who acted as Mr. Clinton's envoy after

planning, was named unification minister, responsible for relations with Communist North Korea. The holder of the post automatically becomes one of two deputy prime ministers.

Former Defence Minister Kwon Young-Hae will head the Agency for National Security Planning, the powerful internal security agency, and Lee Yang-Ho, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was named defence minister.

Finance Minister Park Jae-Yoon was transferred to trade minister and the ambassador to the United States, Han Seung-Soo, was named presidential chief secretary in place of Park Kwang-Yong.

The presidential spokesman said Mr. Kim introduced into his cabinet new figures to implement his crusade to boost South Korea's international competitiveness and eradicate corrupt practices.

The shake-up had been expected since early this month

when Mr. Kim proposed a bill to merge and streamline major government ministries and cut dozens of high-ranking posts.

Parliament earlier Friday passed the reorganisation bill to pave the way for the sweeping cabinet changes.

The bill, under which four major economic ministries would be merged into two new ministries, was passed by 171 votes to 79, a parliamentary spokesman said.

The highlight of the reorganisation is the merger of the Finance Ministry and the Economic Planning Board, which was in charge of drawing up budget plans. The Construction and Transportation Ministries were also merged.

Mr. Kim's proposal to reorganise the government, which will cut posts of 32 senior officials, including two ministers and three vice-ministers, has touched off intense debate in parliament in the past two weeks.

Analysts said Friday's shake-up appeared also aimed at giving his cabinet a facelift following a series of corruption scandals and disasters, including the collapse in October of a bridge in central Seoul which killed 32 people.

In South Korea, a president often reshuffles his cabinet when seeking to boost flagging public confidence in the government.

Analysts said Friday's shake-up appeared also aimed at giving his cabinet a facelift following a series of corruption scandals and disasters, including the collapse in October of a bridge in central Seoul which killed 32 people.

In South Korea, a president often reshuffles his cabinet when seeking to boost flagging public confidence in the government.

Analysts said Friday's shake-up appeared also aimed at giving his cabinet a facelift following a series of corruption scandals and disasters, including the collapse in October of a bridge in central Seoul which killed 32 people.

In South Korea, a president often reshuffles his cabinet when seeking to boost flagging public confidence in the government.

N. Ireland loyalists press U.K. for prisoner amnesty

BELFAST (R) — Protestant politicians pressed Britain Friday to grant an amnesty to hundreds of loyalist prisoners to match an Irish amnesty which freed nine IRA convicts and gave 30 parole for Christmas.

"It's not prisoners' parole that's at the top of our agenda, it's the release of prisoners," Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) told reporters before starting talks with British

officials in Belfast. He was speaking as nine Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners, including two convicted murderers, walked free from the Irish Republic's Port Laoise maximum security jail under a controversial amnesty by the Dublin government.

They were to have been freed in November but their release orders were scrapped after IRA gunmen killed a postal worker in a robbery in

the border town of Newry which shattered an IRA ceasefire that started in September.

Britain refuses to grant amnesty to hundreds of IRA and loyalist prisoners despite appeals to make a gesture of clemency to reward both groups for declaring ceasefires since September which have ushered in an unprecedented era of peace.

Two small Protestant political parties with links to

loyalist guerrillas who fought to keep Northern Ireland British said they would be raising the prisoner issue at their second round of talks with British officials since the ceasefires.

Britain has allowed 350 Republican and loyalist prisoners home for Christmas leave this year, about 100 fewer than in 1993, and has rejected appeals for a more sweeping amnesty.

We're pleased to announce our return.

Two new weekly British Airways flights from Amman to London Heathrow. Exceptional in-flight entertainment and Halal cuisine. Special Middle East Visitor Service. Global connections through our Heathrow and Gatwick hubs. And the unparalleled hospitality that makes you feel right at home wherever in the world you are. It's nice to be back.

BRITISH AIRWAYS
The world's favourite airline



Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975
مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 667171/6, 670141-4
Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO
Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Where environment suffers

THE DIRE consequences of the Gulf war on Iraq obviously exceed the direct losses in lives and material damage. Today, nearly four years later, the Iraqi people are still paying a heavy price in more ways than could be imagined before.

A seminar on the after-effects of the war took place recently in Baghdad and what the participants discovered was so horrific that it left many of them tormented, sad and above all angry at the callous posture of the community of nations towards the continuing tragedy in Iraq. The story that unfolded in that international meeting which included imminent scholars from the four corners of the world, portrayed a very grim picture about the irreversible dangers to Iraq's environment and eco-system touched off by the persistent blockade.

The experts did not just confine their deliberations to the conference room; they went out, visited places, talked to people and established for themselves the extent of the damage to Iraq's environment as a result of the war. The sewage system that was inspected was overflowing out in the open with all sorts of contaminated water because Iraqi municipal authorities are unable to mend or expand it as was originally conceived and planned. Once fertile land in Iraq has turned into waste land again because of extended negligence brought about by the sanctions. The waters of the main rivers in Iraq, the Euphrates and Tigris, are now contaminated and polluted. Even garbage can no longer be collected to meet the minimum health standards of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Clearly, neither drinking water nor irrigation water escaped from heavy pollution from open sewerage and other polluting sources. No wonder child mortality in Iraq has seen a dramatic rise in the aftermath of the war and cancer cases among adult Iraqis are shooting up in recent years.

The big question that remains is why the West continues to punish not only the regime but the people and Iraq as a country? What long-term interest can be served by spreading disease in Iraq or destroying its ecological system altogether? With all the talk we hear about human rights and humanitarianism, we wonder especially at this time of the year whether the nations behind the sanctions are truly faithful believers in what they preach to others.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE FINANCE minister who presented the 1995 draft budget to Parliament has no power to introduce any new taxes in order to offset the JD 50 million deficit, and therefore the alternative at his disposal is to suggest reducing expenses and controlling imports, said Fahd Al Fakher, a writer in Al Ra'i Arabic daily. The writer noted that if the government secures Parliament's endorsement of the budget it would be like winning a vote of confidence over its policies in the coming year. Regardless of who is in charge of the Foreign Ministry or the government nothing can be done to change the system of working out the Jordanian fiscal budgets each year although some governments tend sometimes to give priority to certain aspects more than others from time to time, said the writer. It should be noted, he said, that 90 per cent of the budget is allocated for salaries, administrative expenses and payment of premiums on loans or interests on them and, therefore very little margin is left for the government to manoeuvre and find ways to deal with the deficit. The writer expressed belief that the 1995 draft budget was bound to be endorsed since it is almost impossible to find an alternative budget under the prevailing circumstances.

AL Dastour daily discussed a suggestion by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in which he proposed that the Arab League be transformed into a Middle East league so that Israel can join the Arab states in the new Middle East order. Peres seems to have forgotten that the Arabs had created the Arab League as a club where they can settle inter-Arab issues and chart programmes primarily for the interests of the Arab masses alone, said the paper. The Israeli Foreign Minister should realise that the Arab League groups states with the same culture, history and common destiny and above all people with common feelings and objectives, added the daily. If Israel is to join the group, said the paper, it ought first to comply with the requirements of peace with the Arabs and implement resolutions passed by the United Nations concerning its end of occupation of Arab lands and the restoration of the Palestinian people's rights. The paper said that the Arab League charter does not allow for Israel or any other country to be admitted to the Arab League and therefore Peres's dream can never be fulfilled.

JORDANIAN PERSPECTIVE

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Let history not repeat itself

MUCH AS SOME people in the Arab World would like to think otherwise, the recent resolution adopted by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Jerusalem including an acknowledgment of a Saudi prince's contribution to maintaining the Muslim holy shrines in the city while ignoring His Majesty King Hussein's historic role there was not at Jordan's expense in the long term. Indeed, the resolution came as a disappointment to us Jordanians and exposed the ill-feelings some Arab and Muslim countries continue to harbour towards Jordan despite all our efforts to set the record right. Notwithstanding the disappointment, what is of immediate concern to us here in Jordan is the short-sightedness that the Islamic leaders displayed while adopting the resolution.

Let us make one thing clear. Jordan has no problems with the resolution per se since it only underlined the firm stand of the Islamic World against Israeli usurpation of Jerusalem and efforts to Judaise the city, which is holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews. It was a resounding reaffirmation of Muslims' concern over the slow but steady moves adopted by Israel since 1967 to consolidate its grip on Jerusalem and obliterate all non-Jewish characters and identities of the city through creating new realities on the ground. But what bothers us is the OIC move is the unprecedented inclusion of a reference to the recent donation made by Saudi Arabia to maintain the holy sites there while ignoring the difficult responsibilities shouldered by Jordan for decades in the same context.

It is no secret that some of the comments made by some of the participants in the OIC summit in Casablanca were at best offensive to Jordan, including the sarcastic suggestion that it might be a good idea if all the Muslim countries send separate and individual letters of thanks to the Kingdom. The sarcasm and similar comments made by some others were indeed not pleasant, to say the least. They also showed that there are some in the Arab World who are upset by Jordan's strong and emphatic return to mainstream international and regional politics after a short span. It was clear, however, that these parties did not have a common position against Jordan, but were acting as a lobby for individual reasons, including perhaps envy over what the Kingdom accomplished through its carefully charted policies and actions over the years.

The admiration that Jordan enjoys in the international scene for its democratisation, respect for human rights, and

principled stands towards all international and regional issues is no secret. The strong relations that Jordan has established with world centres of real power are indeed the best protection and shield for the Kingdom against any party that might want to harm its interests. In any event, we believe that it is only a matter of time before those parties realise their folly and come to terms with the political course adopted by Jordan.

Beyond that, and more significant and dangerous, was the reality exposed in Casablanca that Islamic countries have not learnt from the past and remain engrossed in short-term objectives.

Let us go three or four decades back and trace the evolution of the so-called Islamic violence and extremism over which the OIC leaders expressed loud concern. Jordan was the first country in the Arab World to not only realise such a danger but also to adopt concrete moves to ensure that Islamic frustrations stemming mostly from world injustices to Muslims do not pose a danger to its national entity. The very presence of political groups which espouse "political Islam" in Jordan since the early 50s and their interaction with the mainstream political parameters and guidelines is the best evidence of the soundness of the Jordanian policy.

Memories are still fresh of the heavy criticism that the Jordanian policy drew from many quarters in the Arab World. Virtually there was an Arab leader who understood and appreciated the wisdom behind the policy of "co-optation and accommodation" that Jordan followed vis-a-vis Islamic political groups as is evidenced in the political system that guides the Kingdom today. It could easily be said that the political ideologies of some of the Islamic groups in Jordan are much more strong and sound than many of their counterparts in the Arab World.

But the outstanding feature of Jordan is the fact that the Kingdom has been spared the rash of violence that many predicted and it was no accident. What we have today is political interaction with Islamic political groups which play a major role in the mainstream politics of our country in a spirit of democracy.

On the other side of the spectrum is what we have seen happening elsewhere in the Arab World; the grand mosque of Mecca in 1979, Syria in 1974 and again in 1981, and Egypt and Algeria today, not to mention the underlying tones of the so-called religious extremism evident in many

other Arab countries.

Had those countries given a thought to what Jordan was advocating and implementing since the 50s and 60s and accepted the wisdom and foresight behind the Kingdom's policies, we would not have had the debates that they witness today.

In essence, it is the same thought that comes to mind in the context of Jerusalem. Jordan has clearly stated its position that it would not relinquish its custodianship of the Islamic holy shrines in Jerusalem under the present conditions and until such time the Palestinians regain their legitimate political and territorial rights and are in a position to assume the responsibilities towards the holy sites.

Regardless of what anyone has to say about the issue, Jordan is firm on its stand that turning away from its role in Jerusalem at this point in time would only mean one thing — clearing the ground for Israel to assume control of the Islamic shrines in Jerusalem and a fast Judaisation of the city after a fast obliteration of its Muslim identity that Jordanians and every other Muslim cherish and seek to safeguard. That was the reason behind Jordan continuing to care for the Muslim sites in the occupied lands, including Jerusalem. That is not to mention the strong emotional links that the Hashemite family has with Jerusalem and the sacrifices that they have made in their endeavours to ensure that the Islamic sanctity of the city is not violated.

Let no one forget that the Hashemites have undertaken the three consecutive restoration projects in Jerusalem, including the personal donations made by His Majesty the King despite deep financial problems.

Those who worked behind the scenes to ensure that an acknowledgment of the Jordanian role in Jerusalem was excluded from the Casablanca resolution on Jerusalem while the financial role of Saudi Arabia played was given a special mention were indeed shortsighted. They might think they won a major victory against Jordan, but they did not realise and appreciate the wisdom of the Jordanian stand just as they did not care to consider the policies and advice of Jordan since the middle of this century.

We can only hope that they would come their senses and realise that history stands to repeat itself unless they rise beyond petty short-term politics and policies and look more closely at the Jordanian track record sooner than later. If not, then the Muslim World would be the loser in the end.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Writers urge government to include old retirees in new pension scheme

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, the situation in the Chechen Republic, the situation in the occupied Arab lands and pan-Arab affairs dominated the editorials and themes of articles of columnists in the local press in the past week.

Commenting on the government's decision to raise the pension of retiring civil servants and servicemen, a columnist in Al Dastour urged Parliament to lobby the government into including the old retirees.

Abmad Shaker commended the government for raising the amount of pensions given to the retired personnel but said that servicemen and civil servants who had retired before under the previous regulations receive meagre pensions barely sufficient for sustenance. He said that the government ought to come to the help of this sector of retired people and allow them to benefit from the regulations and help them lead a decent life in their retirement.

Ahmad Dabbas, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab, dwelt on the same theme calling on the government to be fair to those who retired before December 1994. The writer said that some of the serving employees would be encouraged to seek retirement since they would get good pension after serving more than 20 years with the government. He said the government itself could resort to retiring a great number

of those who had completed the 20 years service in order to employ younger people who had spent years unemployed and seeking jobs to support their families.

A writer in Al Ra'i discussed the future of the Jordanian Company for Television production and said that though its past works were a cause of pride for Jordan the quality of production has deteriorated lately because the company started producing programmes and series not related to the traditional Jordanian heritage and life. The company's past production won wide fame in the Arab World because the managers sought to reflect the Jordanian image to the outside world in their production but the quality declined when topics alien to the Jordanian tradition began to appear in the company's production. Ibrahim Al Absi said that it was hoped that the new management under Faded Fakher would breathe new life into the company and restore to it the good reputation it had always enjoyed over the years.

Former Minister of Health Zeid Hamzeh wrote an article in Al Ra'i daily criticising the inflated public administration system which is bulging every year with the government employees having little to do and only impeding all attempts towards reforming the system. The writer gave the view that by stopping further appointment

in government departments, the government would encourage the private sector to flourish and absorb more job seekers. He said that the public administration was like a cancer eating away the gains that the Kingdom was achieving and impeding the Kingdom's progress in all domains.

A writer in Al Dastour demanded the government apply a comprehensive health insurance system to cover all members of the public and ensure good health for every one. It is only people who enjoy good health who can be productive and rid themselves of poverty and unemployment and it is those who enjoy good health who can best serve their nation, said Ali Safadi, a former advisor to the prime minister. The writer urged the concerned authorities to take extra care about ensuring the good quality of foodstuffs, no pollution of drinking water and preventing the pollution of air by smoke or industrial and other waste. The writer said that the whole country suffers and pays the cost for the treatment of the sick but sickness can be avoided through precautionary measures that are essential for the benefit of the whole nation.

Reflecting on the situation in the Chechen Republic, Al Ra'i daily said that Jordan is very concerned over the tragic situation befalling the Chechen people and the continued military confrontation to settle a dispute that could have been resolved through dialogue and peaceful means. It is true that Jordan does not wish to meddle in other countries' affairs but it is also true that the people of Jordan as a whole are deeply concerned over the loss of innocent life resulting from an attempt by the Chechen people to seek independence. The paper noted that the war was bound to leave very deep scars and hatreds for decades to come no matter what the outcome of the current conflict could be.

Mohammad Kawash, a writer in Al Dastour, reminded the Russian people that they had rejected the Communist rule and rebelled against it and said why should Moscow now try to impose on the Chechens something which they reject. The writer said that Russia as a major world power has a great deal of interests with the Arab and Islamic world and should, therefore, respect the feelings of the Muslims and stop its fight against the Chechen brothers. Moscow should respect the Chechen's desire to achieve independence from the Russian Federation.

Observers who follow up the behaviour of the Israeli government realise that Israeli leaders are not concerned with the implementation of the Oslo agreement with the Palestinians nor are they keen on pulling troops from the

occupied territories. It is the military which controls the destiny of the Israeli society by influencing the government actions all the time, said Walid Abu Bakr. The writer said that nothing in what Israel has done since its signing of the Oslo agreement proves that the Israelis are really intent on granting the Palestinians their rights or reaching a just and permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Taber Adwan, a columnist for Al Dastour, accused the Israelis of preventing the Palestinians from organising free elections in implementation of the Oslo and Cairo agreements. The writer said that while the Palestinians consider their agreement with Israel as a way towards resolving the conflict and ending the occupation, Israel considers the agreements as a means for perpetuating their presence in Arab land. The delay in the implementation of the agreements and the obstacle in the path of the elections are clear manifestations of the Israeli government's intentions, said the writer.

Hamadeh Faraneh criticised the Israeli government for dragging its feet on the question of repatriating the thousands of Palestinian citizens who were turned away because their permits had expired. He asked how could Israel hope for normalisation of relations with the Arabs

while holding tight to its obsolete policy of depriving the Palestinians of the right of return. The writer said that Israel has been seeking an end of the state of war with the Arabs but without giving anything in return. It has not yet returned the occupied lands and now it refuses to accept the return of the displaced people, added the writer.

Al Dastour daily considered a statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in Bahrain as bearing positive signals especially towards Iraq. The paper said that the GCC's statement over Jerusalem, rejecting any change in its status and character, was also a good step towards enhancing the Arab stand. In fact the GCC statement was supportive of Jordan's declared position which demanded the return of Arab Jerusalem and the establishment of a comprehensive peace.

Commenting on the recent demonstrations in Bahrain, a writer in Al Ra'i said that the government there ought to respect the view of the public even though they are Shiites. It is shameful for the Arab states not to support the Arab masses when they are demanding democratic rule. The writer compared the repressive measures exercised by certain Arab regimes against their masses to the American hegemony and oppression it is exercising on the Arab regimes in the Gulf.

Carter does it again — but what is it exactly?

By Arthur Spiegelman
Reuters

NEW YORK — There he goes again, telling some world-class pariah what a nice guy he is and presto — like magic — peace appears to move a step or two closer.

Dressed in a turtleneck, smiling broadly and armed only with moral force, former President Jimmy Carter marched into the quagmire of former Yugoslavia, the place where World War I started, and appeared to forge a ceasefire in Bosnia starting on Friday, weather and warring parties permitting.

He mispronounced the names of the adversaries in the dispute, fails to impress anyone with his command of the issues and yet winds up with a possible diplomatic triumph.

If the ceasefire actually takes place with peace talks

following, it will be the third major foreign policy success this year for America's hardest working ex-president, a man who specialises in going where angels wisely fear to tread.

Since losing the presidency to Ronald Reagan in 1980, Mr. Carter has built up a reputation as a lone ranger of American foreign policy, a fellow willing to deal with any dictator, but especially those the rest of the world avoid like the plague, like North Korea's late "great leader" Kim Il-Sung and Haiti's former strongman Raoul Cedras.

Time magazine calls him the "master practitioner of one-way diplomacy" and "a superb ex-president."

The 70-year-old Carter's technique is to show up and

embrace the enemy, tell him how misunderstood he is in the wider world, how you know his heart is in the right place, how he is not the demon everyone says he is and how problems can be solved without force, especially the use of American force.

The technique works. The question is how. Is it the powers of moral suasion that Mr. Carter brings to bear? The iron will behind the big grin? Or is it that by the time the call goes out for Jimmy Carter, the other party is willing to play "let's make a deal"?

In Haiti, Mr. Carter managed to avert an imminent U.S. invasion by convincing Mr. Cedras to snap down and give control back to the democratically elected but

undemocratically ousted president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

To do that, Mr. Carter heaped praise on Mr. Cedras, a man few had a good word for outside of military headquarters. He offered to have Mr. Cedras teach a Sunday school class at Mr. Carter's Baptist Church, praised Mrs. Cedras for her beauty and intelligence and admired their children.

He was finishing up the deal as Bill Clinton was sending American warplanes off to bomb targets in Haiti. The U.S. president called the planes back and the Carter mission succeeded. A lot of Americans and Haitians probably owe their lives to Mr. Carter.

North Korea was a more

complicated story.

Mr. Carter accepted an invitation to meet Kim Il-Sung and discuss North Korea's nuclear programme as the United States was readying U.N. sanctions that the communist country claimed would be an act of war.

Told by the Clinton administration he was not there to negotiate, he walked off with an agreement under which North Korea would freeze its nuclear programme if the two sides entered good-faith negotiations. He also announced the deal on CNN before informing the White House. The result was embarrassment for Mr. Clinton but no new Korean war.

In the Serbian stronghold of Bosnia this week, Mr. Carter met Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, told him

Americans were only hearing one side of the story and that U.N. sanctions on Serbia could be lifted if the Bosnian Serbs showed good faith on a ceasefire, allowed Sarajevo airport to function and U.N. convoys to move through the countryside.

The statements raised the usual hackles in government circles but Mr. Carter was able to fly off to Croatia saying that both Bosnians Serbs and Muslims accepted a ceasefire.

Robert Pastor, a senior aide at Carter's Centre for Conflict Resolution says Mr. Carter can move into places that governments can't.

And he can get things done, even while the world doubts or scoffs at his technique.

كثيرا ما يصدق

World ends year of chaos though with some hope

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

LONDON — From Chechnya to Rwanda and Bosnia, conflict, misery and chaos stalked the world in 1994, making a mockery of hopes that a new order could emerge five years after the end of the cold war.

There were also signs of hope with progress towards reconciliation in some areas where it seemed peace would never come — the Middle East, South Africa and northern Ireland.

But, as the millennium approaches, it was a year that generally lived up to the 20th century's reputation as the most destructive and bloody in history.

There was much talk of peacekeeping but often little peace to keep. The United Nations now has more than 80,000 personnel deployed in more than a dozen missions around the globe.

The world community repeated its condemnation of atrocities and aggression and its commitment to international law and human rights like a mantra at every diplomatic gathering.

But behind the words institutions like the United Nations, NATO and the European Union seemed increasingly impotent and over-stretched by the pace of change. Major powers were divided, their governments weak and tired, lacking in political will.

Russia, still struggling to overcome the Soviet legacy and build a sound economy, took a tougher line with its western partners over Bosnia, Iraq and NATO expansion.

The United States floundered in foreign policy, raising troubling questions about traditional U.S. leadership of the Western world. President Bill Clinton was deeply unpopular at home and threatened by a wave of support for the Republicans. "Both countries worried about unrest close to their borders. The United States sent troops to Haiti in September, narrowly averting an open conflict with the country's military rulers before they stepped down."

Russia sent troops and

tanks into the breakaway region of Chechnya in December and tried to keep the lid on conflicts in other parts of the troubled Caucasus region on its southern rim.

From Japan to Italy other governments found themselves in serious trouble as they struggled to pull their countries out of recession or deal with charges of corruption.

New threats and worries were added to existing problems — the smuggling of nuclear materials, the risk that North Korea and others might have atomic weapons and the continued rise of Islamic fundamentalism in countries such as Algeria.

With Islam the fastest growing religion in the world and Asia establishing itself as perhaps the real hub of economic power, the Western world became more aware that its values and views were no longer accepted as dominant.

Perhaps more than anything else, 1994 will be remembered as the year in which the world stood by and watched as up to one million people were slaughtered in a tiny African republic.

The massacres and renewed war in Rwanda, which set minority Tutsi rebels against the Hutu majority, was touched off by the assassination of the country's president in April.

Three months later the rebels had won. Refugee camps in the region are filled mainly with Hutus, fearful of retribution after the massacres. Most of those who died were Tutsis.

Although France sent troops to set up "safe areas" for refugees and the United Nations later sent in some peacekeepers, no one intervened to stop the massacre.

In Bosnia, too, the killing went on as the war entered its third winter. Europe's worst conflict since World War II defied every diplomatic effort to end it, despite the emergence of a new coalition including the United States and Russia in the five-nation "contact group."

The United Nations managed to end the Serb siege bombardment of Sarajevo with the threat of NATO air strikes in February. The 16-

nation alliance shot down Serb planes and launched air strikes, the first military action in its history.

But what looked like a new show of resolve had collapsed in humiliation by the end of the year, when the United Nations decided it was too risky for peacekeepers to call in more NATO strikes in defence of so-called "safe areas" like Bihac.

The Bosnian Serbs refused to accept an international peace plan, despite pressure from Serbia, and there was talk of pulling out U.N. forces.

Peacekeepers also left Somalia where a U.S.-led mission to stop the fighting and rebuild the Horn of Africa state had gone disastrously wrong. The last U.N. troops will be gone from Somalia by the end of March 1995.

South Africa provided one of the few bright spots on a continent ravaged by poverty, disease, instability and wars that continued in countries such as Angola.

Nelson Mandela, imprisoned under the apartheid regime, became president after the first all-race elections in April. His victory drew a line under the era of white domination and ended South Africa's international isolation.

There was hope, too, for reconciliation in the Middle East although the path to a lasting peace proved difficult.

Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in October, complementing the agreement between the Jewish state and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on self-rule. PLO leader Yasser Arafat returned home in triumph to Gaza.

For their efforts, Mr. Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his Foreign Minister Shimon Peres were awarded the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize.

However, talks between Israel and Syria remained deadlocked and not everyone backed the peace process.

In February a Jewish settler killed about 30 Palestinians praying at a mosque in Hebron. A suicide bomber from the militant Muslim group Hamas blew up a packed bus in Tel Aviv in October, killing 22 people.



... And the killing continues (AFP photo)

Such attacks, including the bombing of a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires which killed almost 100, showed that 1970s-style political violence had not disappeared despite the capture of guerrilla mastermind "Carlos the Jackal" in August.

Problems also plagued other parts of the Middle East.

Iraq, desperate for relief from U.N. sanctions that followed the 1991 Gulf war, sent troops to the Kuwait border in October, forcing the United States to deploy thousands of soldiers to the Gulf before Baghdad backed off. Yemen was torn by civil war.

In Europe, NATO and the European Union (EU) started discussions about taking in former communist states, who are eager to join the rich western clubs and find stability.

But, as Russian and western troops left Berlin five years after the fall of communism, it was clear that

Europe remained a continent divided, riven by old suspicions and jealousies.

Sweden, Austria and Finland voted to join the 12-nation EU. Norway decided to remain outside the bloc, which otherwise made little fresh progress towards greater European integration following problems with the Maastricht treaty.

Many governments seemed weak and unpopular. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl saw his majority cut in elections and French President Francois Mitterrand fell seriously ill.

In Italy, a political revolution swept the old order from power in March. But Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi then found himself dogged by allegations of mismanagement and corruption.

The far-right, part of Italy's new coalition, made gains in other countries such as Austria and Belgium as voters showed their discontent with the established order.

There was a real breakthrough in one of the world's longest-running conflicts, be-

tween the British government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in northern Ireland.

The IRA, fighting to end British rule in a conflict that has lasted 25 years, announced a ceasefire in September. Loyalist guerrillas followed suit and peace talks could finally start.

For Asia, the year was marked by political uncertainty.

North Korea, suspected by the United States and others of developing nuclear weapons, sparked an international crisis by refusing to allow inspection of its nuclear facilities.

The crisis underlined growing fears about a new nuclear threat. Police in Germany and elsewhere seized highly radioactive materials smuggled out of the former Soviet Union.

North Korea finally agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in a deal with the West but fresh questions were raised by the death of its Stalinist leader, Kim Il-Sung, in July.

His son, Kim Jong-Il, prepared to take up the reins of leadership. But there were few clues to indicate what this would mean for one of the world's most isolated and secretive states.

There were questions, too, about China, potentially the dominant power in Asia and set to take over Hong Kong in 1997.

With Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping looking increasingly feeble and frail, who will take over at a time when the country is developing economically at breakneck speed?

Japan, locked in disputes with the United States over trade, was wracked by unremitting political upheaval that brought in a Socialist

prime minister for the first time in nearly 50 years.

For those who believe that wealth and economic well-being could help eradicate many of the world's troubles, 1994 offered some consolation.

More than 100 countries signed the world's biggest free trade pact, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into force and 18 countries from the Asia-Pacific region pledged to work for free trade in their booming region within 25 years.

But it also became clear that another, darker kind of global economic power was at work.

Over 130 countries agreed at a meeting in Naples in November to fight organised crime, with concern growing at the power and influence of those who peddle drugs and launder money.

Russian deputies urge Grozny ceasefire

(Continued from page 1)

Moscow to avoid bloodshed and negotiate an end to the fighting.

The European Union and the United States have publicly backed President Yeltsin's argument that Chechnya remains a part of Russia and the conflict there between the troops and the region's separatist militias is an internal matter.

But concern has grown in Western capitals over the future of Mr. Yeltsin, still backed by major powers to lead Russia to a stable future. The

Chechnya crisis has once more raised questions about his health, judgement and political security.

"Yeltsin can risk Russian soldiers' lives storming Grozny or he can besiege it all winter. But whichever way you look at it, Yeltsin does not win any political points," a senior Western diplomat in Moscow said.

"All he can hope is that he can end the crisis as fast as possible, with as little bloodshed as possible, and concentrate on damage control."

In Bonn, a foreign ministry

spokesman said that Germany was following "with anxiety the development of the situation" in Chechnya and hoped that the Russian action could put a question mark over joint Russian and German military manoeuvres planned for next year.

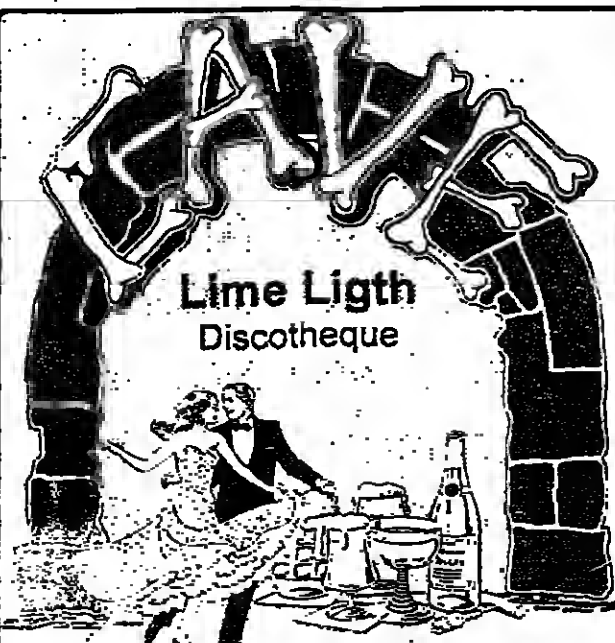
In Prague, Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec said the Russian army offensive "goes beyond the limits of what can acceptably be called internal affairs" and "will certainly have international repercussions."

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING COMPANY SEEKS A REPRESENTATIVE

To promote its list in schools and universities in Jordan. The successful candidate will be a university graduate fluent in English, and with a genuine interest in Education, English Language, English Language Teaching and Books.

He/she must also ideally have a car and some previous experience in sales or teaching. Please write with full CV to:

Publishing Company Job Offer
C/O. P.O.Box 926318
Amman, 11110, Jordan



For those of you who wish to join in the fun here at c.l.l. in Christmas + new year
Wine night at 24th Dec 7.00 J.D. p.p.
New year eve champagne 10 J.D. p.p.
Season Greeting Couples Only
For reservation call 642251/2 city hotel

VACANCY THE BRITISH BANK OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The British Bank of the Middle East is seeking to recruit a Jordanian Internal Auditor to head their Audit Department. Suitable candidates must have the following qualifications/experience/abilities:

- Candidates should be proficient in English and possess a good university degree (CPA and/or similar).
- Experience not less than 5 years in audit.
- Relevant banking experience is preferable.
- Good interpersonal and negotiating skills.

If interested, please send CV and recent photos to:

Audit Post
The Human Resources Executive
The British Bank of the Middle East
P.O.Box 925286
Amman-Jordan

Last day to submit applications is on 06 JAN. 95.

Hotel INTER-CONTINENTAL JORDAN

Christmas Calendar of Events

Christmas Eve

Superb gourmet dinners have been planned by our chefs as a Christmas gift to you. Enjoy your dinner at El-Pasha Nightclub or at Okaz Restaurant. Both menus at JD 14,000 ++

Christmas Day

- Christmas Lunch Buffet in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel. Live music & raffle prizes will keep you entertained. Santa will be there. JD 15,000 inclusive.
- For those who prefer à la carte menu or a 3 course set menu, Okaz offers just the right dishes. JD 14,000 inclusive.

Christmas Specialities

Throughout the Christmas season, our Ginger Bread House will open its doors. A wide selection of Ginger bread, Christmas puddings, Christmas stollen, cakes and chocolates will be for sale until December 26th.

For turkey orders with all the traditional trimmings kindly contact the F&B office, 48 hours in advance.

For reservations, please call 641361. Food & Beverage or The Box Office

VILLA D'ANGELO

Open Christmas with your family & dear ones with the one you love
Italian Saying

Join us in our mouthwatering Christmas Buffet, brimming with all sorts of delicious Christmas fare, from our traditional stuffed turkey to our delightful heavenly desserts, accompanied by enchanting live music.

This Christmas you may begin a tradition that will last for generations!

J.D. 10 Lunch or Dinner Buffet (inclusive)
Villa D'Angelo, Jabal Amman 1st circle Tel. 636212

Pundits see gold ailing before it gets better

LONDON (R) — The price of gold may drop as low as \$350 an ounce in 1995 or 12.5 per cent down on this year's lacklustre best as higher U.S. interest rates lead investors to quit billion for better returns in equities and bonds.

Reuters this week polled 10 bullion analysts in London and Zurich for 1995 forecasts for gold prices. Few were buoyant. Some saw a return of jewellery and industry demand lifting gold back above the \$400 barrier — but not until late in the year.

Gold is now trading near \$380 from almost \$400 in September.

"The temptation now to buy near the bottom of 1994's range is great. But this may be the top of next year's range," said Andrew Smith, analyst at Union Bank of Switzerland.

Analysts' forecasts for gold range between a low of \$350 from Mr. Smith and a high of

\$430 from Jon Bergthell at James Capel.

"I am not looking for a hull market next year," said Ted Arnold of Merrill Lynch Futures Research.

Hanspeter Hausheer at Swiss Bank Corporation in Zurich saw gold climbing just above \$400 eventually next year.

"We are forecasting good demand for gold. Fundamentals will be increasingly responsible for dictating the price," he said.

But even gold bulls saw it staying below \$400 until the latter part of the year, largely as a result of the decreased involvement of fund investors.

"The investment funds that had taken the metal on board during 1993 have now off-loaded it in search for better returns elsewhere," said Rhona O'Connell at T. Hoare and Co.

"Over 1994 as a whole, the

supply-demand equation looks to have been broadly in balance and the price has responded accordingly," Mr. O'Connell said.

But she saw physical demand for the metal supporting the price above the recent low of \$375 and the diminished presence of speculative players as potentially beneficial for the market.

In other precious metals, forecasts for silver have a wide spread through the year, from a dip to 430 cents from Mr. Smith to a peak at 575 cents at the end of the second quarter by Mr. Hausheer.

Silver is now trading around 480 cents an ounce, well off the 585 cent peak reached in late March.

Mr. Hausheer said the recent fall had stimulated good physical demand from India and that this boded well for next year. But Mr. Smith said Indian selling could reemerge

as moves to rupee convertibility gathered pace and confidence in Indian paper grew.

Mr. O'Connell described silver as a "speculator's dream" in view of its relative cheapness and history of price volatility.

Platinum has a forecast range between \$380 and \$490

during 1995, with bears believing the risk to Russian production is overplayed and bulls pointing to the metal's already tight supply and demand balance.

Palladium forecasts are generally more tightly grouped. Predictions centre

on \$155 an ounce for the end of 1994 with firmness continuing throughout 1995.

Most analysts said continued strong demand from the electrical sector and increased loadings in catalytic converters would underpin values throughout the year.

OECD sees Italian growth but missed budget targets

MILAN (R) — The Italian economy should continue to grow strongly over the next two years, increasingly aided by internal demand, the OECD said.

A heavy budget deficit, however, would hang over the economy, with the Paris-based think tank predicting the government will miss targets set in its 1995 financial package.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) forecast predicted gross domestic product (GDP) growth for Italy at 2.2 per cent in 1994, rising to 2.7 per cent next year and 2.9 per cent in 1996.

Despite the improving economy, the jobs rate was likely to hover around the 11 per cent mark, helping contain inflation.

"Unemployment, though easing from record highs, could remain high, with wage growth subdued and further disinflation gains," the OECD wrote in its year-end report.

The 1995 budget, which is currently passing through parliament, aims to cut 48 trillion lire (\$29.39 billion) from the deficit through spending cuts and revenue increases.

"A deficit overshoot of 13 trillion lire (\$7.96 billion) is projected for 1995, reflecting higher interest rates, possible delays in implementing planned spending cuts and a cautious assessment of the amount of receipts likely to accrue from one-off measures," the OECD said.

The report made no mention of the recent setback to the government's plans for cuts in pension spending. Some revenue-cutting measures were stripped out of the budget-cutting package at the end of November at the insistence of unions.

Stephen Potter, the OECD's head of country studies, told reporters in Paris that this setback — along with expenditure for recent floods in northern Italy — would mean a worsening of the government's fiscal situation.

"Altogether the deficit overshoot we already mentioned in the economic outlook for next year will tend to be rather larger in the absence of further action," he said.

However, he said the OECD was confident that new measures due to be drawn up by the end of next June, would be taken.

The OECD said Italy's budget overshoot would still represent a narrowing of the deficit-to-GDP ratio to 9.1 per cent in 1995, from a projected 9.7 per cent this year, with the ratio forecast to fall further in 1996 to 7.8 per cent.

"But the underlying progress toward budget consolidation may be insufficient to allow any substantial convergence of Italian interest rates with German rates," the OECD said.

Italy's benchmark 10-year bond presently stands at a near five per cent premium to its German counterpart — reflecting how investors saw Italian securities as higher risk investments.

Dollar rally depends on interest rates in U.S.

The following report covering the week from Thursday, Dec. 15 until Wednesday, Dec. 21, 1994, is provided by Messrs Nabulsi, private client group at Merrill Lynch-Dabai

Currency outlook

Overview

Fundamental View: After firming steadily since the Nov. 8 Republican victory in mid-term U.S. elections, the dollar has paused at the DM/USD 1.57 and JPY/USD 100 levels as foreign exchange markets look for new themes. With the Fed having declined to raise rates again at its Dec. 20 FOMC meeting, the next move is likely to be a 50 basis point hike in the Fed funds rate at their Jan. 31-Feb. 1 meeting. A similar rates hike is expected at the March 31 meeting.

If that turns out to be the peaking of U.S. rates as our December forecast assumes, the dollar rally may not have much further to go. If U.S. growth remains strong enough to encourage the Fed to raise the funds rate to 7 per cent or higher, a stronger dollar may result.

For now, we maintain our 12-month forecasts of DM/USD .55 and JPY/USD 92, which assumes that Germany and Japan will hike official interest rates in the second half of 1995.

Technical View: The U.S. dollar was flat last week, gaining ground against three of the six major currencies we regularly discuss and losing ground against three. As a result, the U.S. dollar index fell .01 of a point and, in the process, broke a string of seven consecutive weekly advances. The index has not put together a rally string of that length since the first quarter of 1991.

Although the index challenged important resistance at 90.90-91.00, it was not penetrated. While medium term momentum is still constructive and indicates still higher rally highs in coming weeks, short term oscillators have peaked. Therefore, further weakness, in the context of the still developing uptrend, appear indicated.

A recently deteriorating sentiment background also contributes to the need for a correction. A break below 89.00 would be a good sign that a correction is under way; although benchmark support remains at 84.91, most of the nearby support exists in the 86.80-87.95 range.

Japanese yen

Fundamental View: The dollar has firmed to the JPY/USD 100 level in recent weeks in response to a number of positive factors. These include (1) a move towards restrictive monetary policy in the U.S., (2) the sweeping Republican victory in U.S.-mid-term elections, (3) evidence that Japan's current account surplus is declining rapidly, and (4) the appointment of a new central bank governor in Japan who may not be as hawkish as his predecessor.

That said, the net demand for foreign assets by Japanese investors is expected to remain weak over the next year relative to a current account surplus which should still exceed

\$100 billion. Although the dollar could strengthen further in the coming weeks for the reasons listed above, the surprise to investors is likely to be how it goes over the next 12 months due to weak Japanese demand for foreign assets. We continue to expect the dollar to trade as low as JPY/USD 92 over the next twelve months.

Technical View: The Japanese yen fell 0.1 per cent versus the U.S. dollar during the week ended Dec. 16. Momentum is still weak, and appears to have the potential to have a downward bias into February. If so, this would allow for an upcoming penetration of 100.80-101.80 Y/USD \$ support; such a move would set the stage for further weakness to 105-107. With the above in mind, resistance at 96-97 takes on added significance.

Deutsche mark

Fundamental View: The Deutschmark has been range bound since late-November, trading between DM/USD 1.56 and 1.57. There was little reaction in the currency markets to news that the Fed chose not to raise rates following its FOMC meeting on Dec. 20 as it was not widely expected that they would raise rates. Most market participants are looking for the next rate increase in late January or early February. Until then, economic data should confirm that the U.S. economy is quite strong which is likely to reinforce the need for another rate increase and thus be supportive of the dollar.

By the second quarter of 1995, we expect to see official rates 100 basis points higher, with the Fed funds at 6.5 per cent and the discount rate at 5.5 per cent. Rate increases beyond this will depend on the vitality of the U.S. economy. If it allows, as we expect, then 100 basis points is probably enough. If the economy doesn't slow, we could see more increases.

We do not think that the Bundesbank will lift their key discount and Lombard rates before the second half of 1995, though it is likely that the repo rate will edge higher starting sometime in the first quarter. We maintain our forecast that the dollar-mark exchange rate will trade in a range of DM/USD 1.55-1.60 during 1995.

Technical View: The Deutschmark gained 0.3 per cent against the U.S. dollar last week and has begun to move below the post-February uptrend channel. Sentiment continues to improve, and is now challenging oversold parameters. Momentum still seems to have the potential to remain under pressure until late January or early February. These points suggest that a potentially important medium term top is in place.

Although the 1.58 DM/USD \$ level still has to be monitored as important support, further weakness through 1.595 would lay the groundwork for a move toward 1.64-1.68. Benchmark resistance remains at 1.486, but there is now intervening resistance at 1.544-1.547.

Against the yen, the D-mark gained 0.4 per cent last week. However, medium term oscillators remain under pressure, and still suggest the potential test of the lows of the long term

trading range. That range generates support at 59-60, with resistance above 66.50.

Pound sterling

Fundamental View: It has been a rather quiet period for the pound which traded at USD/GBP 1.56 and DM/GBP 2.56 for most of the last week. Currency markets showed little reaction to news that the Federal Reserve chose not to raise rates following its open market committee meeting on Dec. 20. Most market observers view monetary policy in the U.K., Germany and the U.S. as being on hold for now, so a move was not widely expected. Indeed, the spread between the U.K. and German yield curves has been fairly steady in recent weeks.

Next year, we expect the Bank of England to raise rates by another 100 basis points, pushing the base lending rate up to 7.25 per cent. German official rates — the Lombard and discount rates — are expected to remain unchanged during the first half of 1995 before possibly edging higher in the second half.

As we expect the short-term interest rate differential between Germany and the U.K. to widen, we look for the pound to appreciate against the mark to DM/GBP 2.50 in 12-month's time and we expect the pound to follow the mark higher against the dollar to our 12-month forecast of USD/GBP 1.61.

Technical View: The British pound lost less than 0.1 per cent versus the U.S. dollar during the week ended Dec. 16. Sentiment continues to improve and is near oversold levels. Momentum is weak and has the potential to remain so until February. Important support exists at 1.561-1.526 U.S.\$/L, and a break below that range would allow for a test of the January low at \$1.465. Resistance exists near \$1.58, then \$1.645.

Against the DM, sterling fell 0.3 per cent last week. Momentum is near-oversold and beginning to deteriorate. The inability to rally through 2.48 in coming weeks could suggest an imminent medium term peak. Nearby support exists at 2.435.

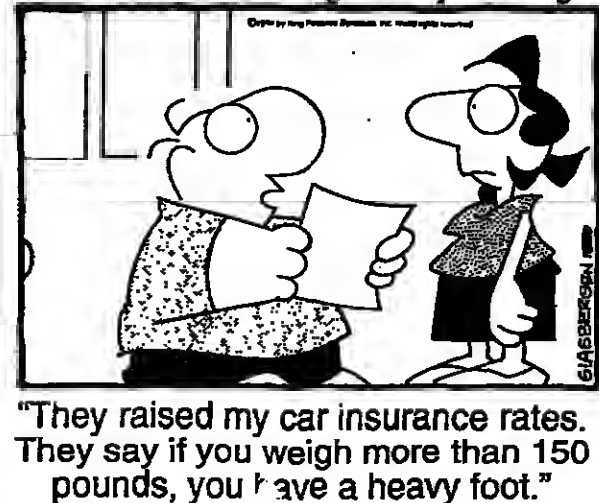
ZERO DAY LEFT for Christmas

The most sentimental present

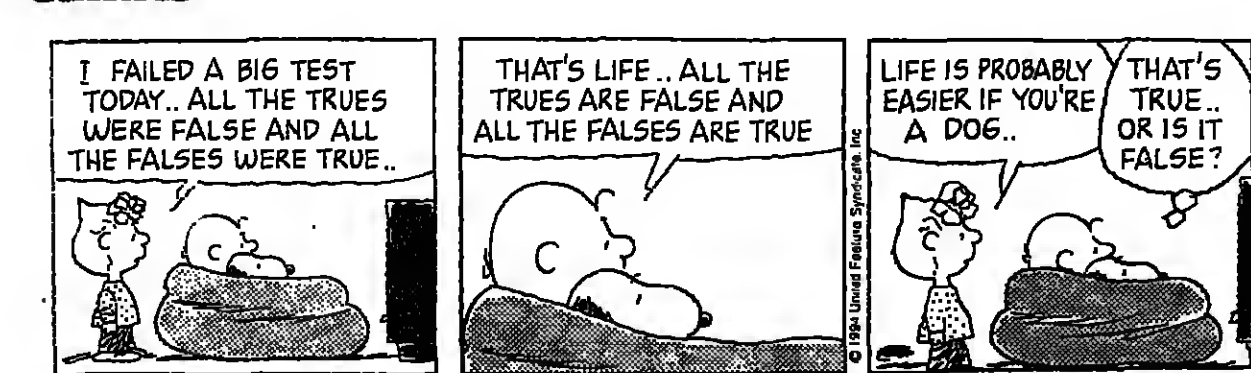
DAJANI'S

Gold-Gems - House Presents etc.
from JD 20, — (36% sale)
Amra Hotel Shops, 6th Circle, Amman.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1994

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Arrive on time for any appointment today and expect to enjoy yourself to a greater extent than you were expecting. Others that you meet will be under the influence of the triple positive aspects.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Do whatever will please those who have power over your affairs this Saturday. Talk plans over with individuals who can help you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Contact those who can assist you in getting your ideas down to a workable level. Make time to travel to exciting locations with your mate.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Find out which persons in business can assist you the most with finest methods for handling your practical outlets towards your success.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be just as practical with partners as they are and forget emotionalism. Take time for entertainment in the evening.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be very practical with your partners and don't go intellectual on them or they will resent it. Be more concerned with kin in the evening.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make those special talents you have work like a charm and you may even become famous as a result. Handle some chores for your mate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Get conditions improved at home so that time and energy are kept off. Keep an eye on the costs of any entertaining you are involved in.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a fine day for getting at all that shopping and errands ahead of you and completing them. Handle long awaited correspondence.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Study your property well and know if it needs repair. Know what your liabilities are and how to remain within your everyday budget.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Make repairs which are needed to your property to retain its value. Don't neglect Saturday marketing and shopping which has been delayed.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Private study can bring about some new and worthwhile course of action. Plan how to reconcile with a good friend over some disagreement.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Greater effort on your part can help to gain your personal aims. Repay any social debts you may have incurred with close friends.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise - Zircon

THE Daily Crossword by Henry Salshendler

ACROSS

- 1 Flea
- 2 Crazes
- 3 Edge
- 4 Desert green
- 5 — a song go...
- 6 Neutical call
- 7 Composer's
- 8 Perry
- 9 Table wrap
- 10 Lenses of note
- 11 Cover art
- 12 material again
- 13 Warmth
- 14 Precious stones
- 15 Tonic
- 16 Advanced in
- 17 rank
- 18 Assess
- 19 Out of work
- 20 Blazing
- 21 Like the Mohave
- 22 Aligned
- 23 Bambi, for one
- 24 Hoisting device
- 25 Blameworth
- 26 Rubbing
- 27 goddess
- 28 Mergul
- 29 Cryptic
- 30 Race track
- 31 "— a Irish flower"
- 32 Beginning
- 33 Chess
- 34 Misfortune
- 35 Melancholy
- 36 Fragments of
- 37 composer's
- 38 work?
- 39 Concerning
- 40 Sane's helpers
- 41 Armored vehicle
- 42 Tally for
- 43 Fashion
- 44 French ape
- 45 Alone
- 46 Tresses
- 47 Alois, abbot
- 48 Mc Taylor, to
- 49 Friends
- 50 Regard highly
- 51 Inland
- 52 Inver
- 53 Winter mo.
- 54 Sound system
- 55 Unending
- 56 workplace?
- 57 Portman of
- 58 "Chess"
- 59 Changed
- 60 particles
- 61 Fable
- 62 "— again, Sam"
- 63 Thompson or
- 64 Semmes
- 65 Composer's
- 66 a child's game?
- 67 Welcome
- 68 Foe from test
- 69 — colic
- 70 French ape
- 71 Planel
- 72 Jeweled
- 73 headless
- 74 Field marsh—
- 75 Remotely
- 76 Tarpaper's
- 77 dried
- 78 Bad notice
- 79 Forearm bone
- 80 Fervor
- 81 Dail sandwich, briefly
- 82 Whitebeets
- 83 Unending
- 84 Pitcher
- 85 Henshaw
- 86 Being Lat.
- 87 Head driver
- 88 Dail sandwich, briefly

DOWN

- 1 Flea
- 2 Crazes
- 3 Edge
- 4 Desert green
- 5 — a song go...
- 6 Neutical call
- 7 Composer's
- 8 Perry
- 9 Table wrap
- 10 Lenses of note
- 11 Cover art
- 12 material again
- 13 Warmth
- 14 Precious stones
- 15 Tonic
- 16 Advanced in
- 17 rank
- 18 Assess
- 19 Out of work
- 20 Blazing
- 21 Like the Mohave
- 22 Aligned
- 23 Bambi, for one
- 24 Hoisting device
- 25 Blameworth
- 26 Rubbing
- 27 goddess
- 28 Mergul
- 29 Cryptic
- 30 Race track
- 31 "— a Irish flower"
- 32 Beginning
- 33 Chess
- 34 Misfortune
- 35 Melancholy
- 36 Fragments of
- 37 composer's
- 38 work?
- 39 Concerning
- 40 Sane's helpers
- 41 Armored vehicle
- 42 Tally for
- 43 Fashion
- 44 French ape
- 45 Alone
- 46 Tresses
- 47 Alois, abbot
- 48 Mc Taylor, to
- 49 Friends
- 50 Regard highly
- 51 Inland
- 52 Inver
- 53 Winter mo.
- 54 Sound system
- 55 Unending
- 56 workplace?
- 57 Portman of
- 58 "Chess"
- 59 Changed
- 60 particles
- 61 Fable
- 62 "— again, Sam"
- 63 Thompson or
- 64 Semmes
- 65 Composer's
- 66 a child's game?
- 67 Welcome
- 68 Foe from test
- 69 — colic
- 70 French ape
- 71 Planel
- 72 Jeweled
- 73 headless
- 74 Field marsh—
- 75 Remotely
- 76 Tarpaper's
- 77 dried
- 78 Bad notice
- 79 Forearm bone
- 80 Fervor
- 81 Dail sandwich, briefly
- 82 Whitebeets
- 83 Unending
- 84 Pitcher
- 85 Henshaw
- 86 Being Lat.
- 87 Head driver
- 88 Dail sandwich, briefly

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: OZONE LOONY GUZZLE TOWARD

Answer: What the boss said when the truck oil — "WELL DONE"

Cleveland, Indiana lead Central Division

OAKLAND (R) — The Golden State Warriors defeated the Washington Bullets 107-87 adding insult to the injury suffered by star forward Chris Webber in his first game against his former team.

Webber, traded by the Warriors to the Bullets last month after a long holdout, dislocated his left shoulder in the third quarter. He returned to the bench in street clothes and will have X-rays.

Tom Gugliotta, whom the Warriors acquired for Webber, scored 18 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to help Golden State snap a 10-game losing streak.

Latrell Sprewell, who was fined for missing practice Wednesday, scored 26 points.

"It was exciting," said Gugliotta, whose new team is just 2-14 since the deal. "I think an player who gets traded away wants to play well against the team they get traded from and I had that same incentive."

"He was definitely super-charged and with the right reasons," Warriors center Royce Seikaly said. "He wanted to show his old team he was the man and they made a mistake."

The Bullets have lost eight straight games and are 2-13 since acquiring Webber, last year's rookie of the year. Webber scored 14 points and

grabbed six rebounds before getting hurt.

In New York, John Williams flipped in a driving hook shot with 20 seconds left then added a pair of free throws with 3.7 seconds to go to give the Cleveland Cavaliers a 93-90 comeback win over the crumbling Knicks.

Bobby Phills scored a season-high 24 points for the Cavs and Mark Price poured in four three-pointers in the fourth quarter as Cleveland overcame the Knicks, who led by as many as 16 points in the second quarter.

The Knicks, last season's NBA runner-up, lost their third straight at home, while Cleveland, winners of seven in a row, moved into a tie with Indiana atop the Central Division.

Cleveland trailed 67-62 entering the fourth quarter but rallied behind Price, who scored 14 of his 19 points in the period. He missed Monday's win at Chicago with bruised ribs.

"In the second half, I tried to get into the flow of things," said Price. "I have been a little rusty lately. After I had a shot or two I got into it."

Charles Oakley scored 19 points and grabbed 13 rebounds for the Knicks, losers of four in a row and six of eight.

"Things are going bad right now," said Knicks guard

John Starks, battling a long shooting slump. "When it rains, it pours."

In Seattle, Gary Payton's driving layup with 7.7 seconds to play lifted the SuperSonics to their 11th straight home victory 103-101 over the Dallas Mavericks.

Payton, who led Seattle with 28 points, scored six in a 13-2 run to end the game. He also hit a layup with 30 seconds remaining to tie the game at 101-101.

At 101-101, Dallas' Jamal Mashburn drove the lane but had his pass intercepted by Kendall Gill, who whirled and threw a fullcourt pass to a streaking Payton.

"Gary and Kendall ran the court with such great speed, with such great finishes and

great runs," gushed Seattle coach George Karl.

Mashburn led Dallas with 24 points.

In Houston, Kenny Smith had 25 points, including a key three-pointer in the fourth quarter, as the NBA champion Rockets took a 114-76 victory over the Phoenix Suns to snap the visitors' seven-game winning streak.

Houston won for only the fifth time in 13 games. "I've always felt we're a better team when we're backed into a corner and a great team is coming into town," said Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich.

Hakeem Olajuwon had 24 points and 15 rebounds for Houston. Danny Manning had 23 points for the Suns,

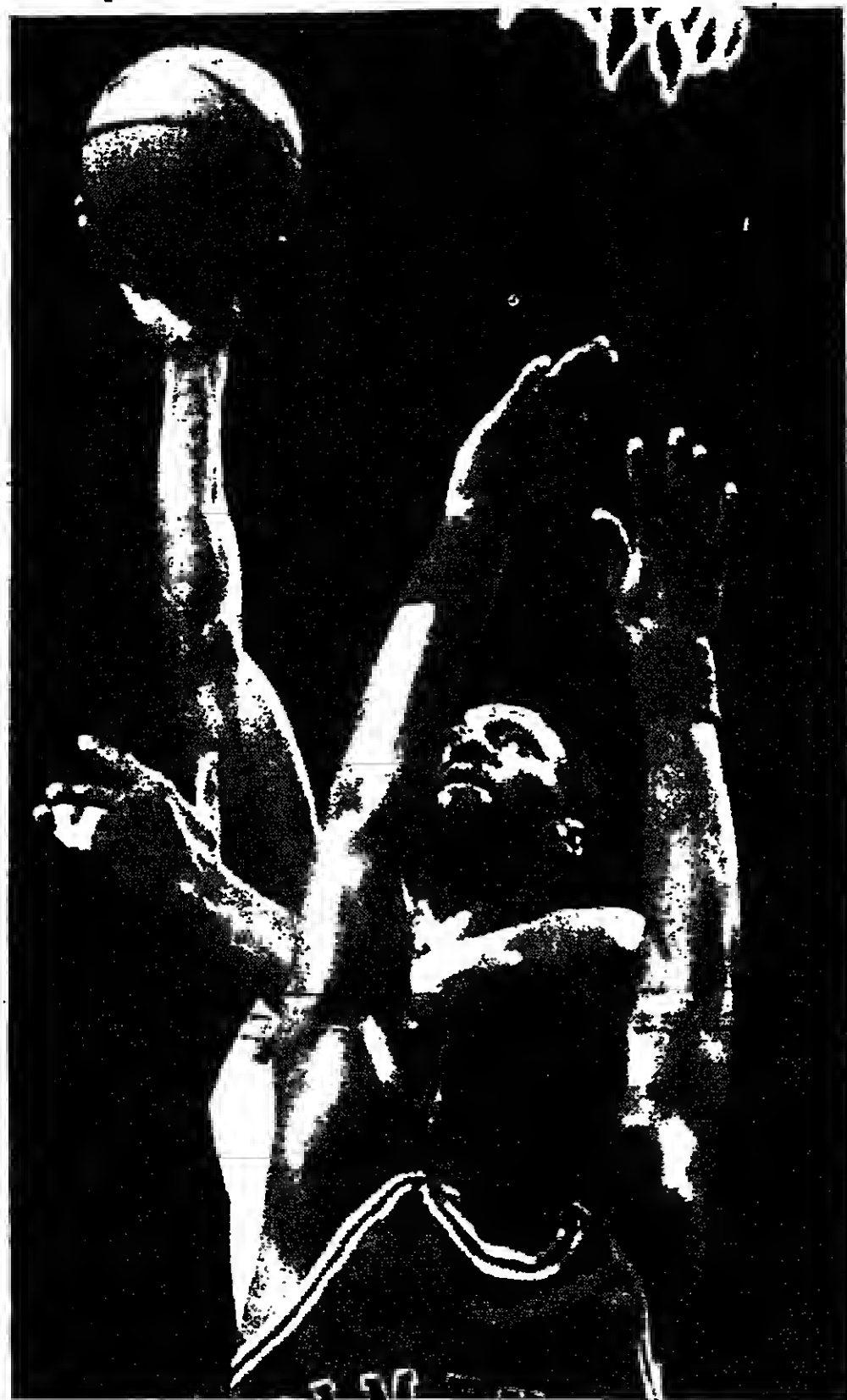
who were connected only 39 per cent of their shots.

In Sacramento, Olden Polynice and Walt Williams each scored 17 points as the Kings gradually pulled away from the Minnesota Timberwolves on the way to a 109-89 victory.

Lionel Simmons added 16 points for the Kings, who have won five of their last six home games.

The woeful T-Wolves, who committed 25 turnovers, were led by Isaiah Rider with 27 points.

In Charlotte, defence proved the best offence for the Hornets who swarmed their way to a 103-91 win over the slumping Philadelphia 76ers.



Indiana Pacers' Dale Davis shoots over Chicago Bulls' Dickey Simpkins during the game won by the Pacers 107-99 (AFP photo)

Memorable Sports Quotes from 1994

By The Associated Press

"He was the only person in this country who made us feel proud to be Brazilians. He gave us dignity, and to see him race was a relief from all the corruption, misery and poverty that surrounds us." — 23-year-old law student Fernando Machado Lemos as he waited to see Ayrton Senna's coffin.

"Formula One cars are too light for the speed they run at. But this tragedy woke up many people who were sleeping. It's necessary to review all the rules." — Emerson Fittipaldi on the death of Ayrton Senna.

"I was proud to compete against him, professionally. Senna was the only driver I respected. In Senna's honour, I will never sit in a Formula One car again." — Alain Prost.

"Me, they killed me, I'm completely dead. They cut my legs away from me. I think they've now cut my entire body away. I don't know where I stand. I can't find myself." — Diego Maradona after being banned from the World Cup.

"I've been looking for new kitchen curtains for a long time." — Norwegian goalkeeper Erik Thorsrud after trading jerseys with Mexican keeper Jorge Campos at the World Cup.

"I'm a real popular mayor. But I don't want to stretch my popularity that far." — Dallas mayor Steve Bartlett about a World Cup 1994 proposal to ban alcohol sales during the tournament.

"He's a perfectionist. If he was married to Demi Moore, he'd expect her to be a good cook." — Former U.S. National soccer team captain Rick Davis on U.S. coach Bora Milutinovic.

"I get letters from Princess Di thanking me for taking her out of the headlines." — Former England Manager Graham Taylor, who was fired after not qualifying for the English World Cup.

"You've got to be joking. Even the Pope would have second thoughts about taking the job." — Switzerland national soccer team manager Roy Hodgson about inquiring for the job as England coach.

"Not so long ago we were teaching the Americans how to play. Now I've got work permits for them playing up on my desk." — English soccer players' union head Gordon

Taylor. "I don't think, experience-wise, that I have to get hit in the face with a skunk four times before I smell it." — Bill Parcells, coach of the American National Football League's new England Patriots who says he knows he was to change his game plan every week to minimize mistakes.

"Sometimes you're a hug, and sometimes you're a windshield, and tonight we were the bug. They squashed us." — U.S. coach Ron Wilson after a 6-2 opening-round loss to Sweden at the world ice hockey championships.

"It'll take me two months to get in shape, and I'll be back in the ring, and believe me, my lips won't move." — Ray Mercer, heavyweight contender, after being acquitted of making a mid-night offer of \$100,000 for an underdog opponent to take a dive.

"I exercised the ghost once and forever." — George Foreman, 45, after knocking out Michael Moorer to win the IBF and WBA heavyweight championships, on his loss to Mohammad Ali 20 years ago.

"The thing I miss most in my life right now is that element of risk. I really enjoyed putting it all on the line. God wasn't ready to take me, but he wanted to slow me down." — Paralyzed former world motorcycle champion Wayne Rainey.

"I'd just like to say I'm really sorry I interfered." — Tonya Harding, after pleading guilty to conspiring to hinder prosecution in the attack on rival skater Nancy Kerrigan.

"Probably everybody needs (Monica Seles) back. I think that's what everybody needs so I wouldn't have to answer that question anymore." — Steffi Graf.

"I've been at the twilight of my career longer than most people have had their careers." — Martina Navratilova, who retired after the 1994 season.

"For a long time, I barely raced any downhill, but I hope that I can now calculate the risks quite well. If your time is up, it's up — it could happen in the street, anywhere." — Uliks Mader in an interview four weeks before her death.

"Right now, I have no reason to believe the Chinese Federation is behind it. We have no proof of a systematic, governmental or federation doping campaign." — FIFA secretary Guusman Werner.

Jordan Handball Championship Ahli, Arabi retain top spots

By Rostam Nabhas

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Al Arabi beat Al Hussein 27/23 Thursday at the Al Hassan Sports City in Irbid to remain in the lead with Al Ahli after the 10th week of the Kingdom's Handball Championship.

Arab/Hussein 27/23: In an exciting start, Al Hussein surprised Al Arabi who looked weak and unorganised in defence. Al Hussein's Maher Maltas took advantage and scored for his team.

Al Arabi, stunned by the strong attack of Al Hussein, concentrated more depending on Mohammad Abu Lail and Moufag Fateh Allah to get through Hussein's strong defence to

end the first half 14/10.

In the second half the match witnessed an unusual turn in which Al Hussein pressed the defence area of Al Arabi and succeeded in moving ahead and lead 18/16.

In the 24th minutes unusual events took place during which one spectator hit Al Hussein's Maher Abu Lail and chaos spread forcing the referee to stop the match for 15 minutes until order was regained by the police.

Al Arabi won the match 27/23.

Ahli/Salt 42/32: Al Ahli stayed in the lead with 18 points after beating Al Salt 42/32 at the Sports Palace in Amman.

Al Ahli played with confidence depending on Mahmoud Taha Hamash-

neh and Nabil Jamil to build successful attacks from the wings Hussein Ahmad and Issa Abdel Allah to end the first half 20/15.

Al Salt looked confused and hesitated especially in passing balls and that gave Al Ahli a bigger chance to end the match with 42/32 score.

Amman/Orthodox: Meanwhile in another match Amman scored a 27/24 win over Al Orthodox and moved to fifth position with six points.

Al Ahli and Al Arabi are the top two with 18 points but Al Ahli are in first place on goal differences.

Salt third with 8 points, Hussein with 7 points, are fourth.

Al Orthodox are last with 2 points.

STANDINGS

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Orlando	19	5	.792	—
New York	12	11	.522	6½
New Jersey	12	15	.444	8½
Boston	10	14	.417	9
Philadelphia	8	16	.333	11
Miami	7	15	.318	11
Washington	6	16	.273	12

Central Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Indiana	15	7	.682	—
Cleveland	16	8	.667	—
Charlotte	14	10	.583	2
Chicago	11	12	.478	4½
Detroit	9	13	.409	6
Atlanta	10	15	.400	6½
Milwaukee	7	16	.304	8½

Western Conference

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Utah	18	8	.692	—
Houston	14	8	.636	2
Dallas	12	9	.571	3½
San Antonio	12	9	.571	3½
Denver	12	10	.545	4
Minnesota	5	19	.208	12

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Phoenix	18	6	.750	—
Seattle	16	7	.694	1½
LA Lakers	14	8	.636	3
Sacramento	13	10	.565	4½
Portland	11	10	.524	5½
Golden State	9	15	.375	9
L.A. Clippers	3	21	.125	15

Results of NBA

Utah	103	Atlanta	94
Charlotte	103	Philadelphia	91
Cleveland	93	New York	90
Houston	114	Phoenix	106
Seattle	103	Dallas	101
Golden State	107	Washington	87
Sacramento	109	Minnesota	89

APARTMENT WANTED

Family of 6, looking for apartment or villa to rent with phone + central heating.

For JD 350.

Call 642251-2, Rm. 208

FOR RENT

At the 4th Circle
Super deluxe furnished apartment
2nd floor, 3 bedrooms, 2 verandas, 250m².
Call 777916/674935

FOR RENT

Deluxe furnished apartment, 3 bedrooms, living-dining room, kitchen and bathroom.
Location: Wasfi Tal Street (Gardens), behind Jordan Kuwait Bank.
Call: 832902

X-MAS MASS ON MOUNT NEBO

Christmas Eve Mass will be celebrated at the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo by the Franciscan Community on Saturday 24th December at 8:00 p.m.

ALL ARE WELCOME

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TARIK HUSSEIN
© 1994 Tribune Media Services

JUST A SPOONFUL OF DECEPTION

North-South vulnerable. West deals.

NORTH
♠ 5 4 3
♥ Q 10
♦ 6 5 2
♣ A 8 6

EAST
♠ J 7
♥ K 5
♦ J 9 8 7
♣ K Q J 10 8 2 4 3

THE BIDDING
West North East South
3♣ Pass 4♣
Pass 5♣
Pass 6♣
Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

Among the most colorful figures on the bridge scene today is Pakistani Zia Mahmood, now virtually a resident of the Big Apple. Besides his flair at the table, he is an active promoter of the game, a columnist and an author of a popular book, *Bridge for Dummies*. Here is an example of Zia at work in a high-stake rubber-bridge game at one of New York's premier clubs.

Sitting West, Zia took advantage of the vulnerability to preempt with

Merry Christmas

1994 December

CHRISTMAS DINNER
AL YARMOUK RESTAURANT

CHRISTMAS GALA DINNER
AL ANDALUS NIGHT CLUB

For Information & Reservations:
607121, 696541

Merry 'Cheersmas' & A Happy New Year

From Cheers At

Turino

Turino For "Taste"
Turino For "Good Taste"

Sweifiyeh - 816690

VICTORINOX

SWISS ARMY KNIFE

WANTED
PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATOR

The American embassy in Amman is looking for a professional translator. Successful candidate must have excellent knowledge of both Arabic and English and be able to translate into fluent, idiomatic English. University degree in translation/liberal arts — or degree and several years of professional translation experience is required. Candidate must have good working knowledge of current affairs and be able to work under pressure with precision and speed. Day and evening shift work, including weekends and holidays, is required. Candidates must take extensive tests in translation and knowledge of world events. Only qualified applicants need apply. Previous applicants need not reapply. Interested persons may pick up an application from the embassy and submit it with a recent picture to the attention of the Personnel Officer. Deadline for receiving applications: Jan. 8, 1995.

The Episcopal Church in Amman and Agaba
Christmas Services in English

Amman: English language Anglican services are held in the Church of the Redeemer, First Circle, near the Alhivah School. Telephone 852828.

Saturday 24th December. Christmas Eve 4:00 p.m. Crib Service for Children.

11:15 p.m. Midnight Mass.

Sunday 25th December, Christmas Day
11:00 a.m. Joint English and Arabic Eucharist

AGABA

At the Missions to Seamen Church
Telephone 318416/7.

Saturday 24th December, Christmas Eve
11:30 p.m. Midnight Mass

Sunday 25th December, Christmas Day. 10:00 a.m. Eucharist both in English.



Italian skier, Alberto Tomba hits a gate on his way in the first run of the men's World Cup slalom Dec. 20 (AFP photo)

Alberto Tomba ready for elusive world crown

ALTA BADIA (R) — In eight years at the top, Alberto Tomba has had his share of ups and downs. But after five wins this season "La Bomba" is back, more explosive than ever, ready to claim the world ski titles that have eluded him since his debut in 1986.

The Italian has been so impressive that he has started to believe he can become world champion at last in February and even lift the World Cup, usually the trophy for all-rounders.

"I'll start to think about the World Cup after the worlds in Sierra Nevada. I don't want to get nervous about it. I just want to win races and then I'll have time to think," he said.

"There will be a lot of downhills in January as well as two combined events and

I don't think I can still be in the lead before the worlds," added Tomba who is currently top of the overall standings.

In spite of their poor start to the season, Tomba thinks World Cup holder Kjetil Andre Aamodt of Norway and Luxembourg's Marc Girardelli, both at ease in all Alpine events, will soon strike back.

But the Italian, who finished second in the World Cup in 1988 and 1992, has more trumps up his sleeve this season. He wins giant slaloms again, after a two-year gap, as he demonstrated in Alta Badia on Thursday.

With four successive slalom victories this season, Tomba seems to have rediscovered the exceptional talent which made him a star in the 1987-88 season. He won 11 races then, including two Olympic golds.

"I think I'm even better than I was then because the level of competition has increased radically," he said.

The major difference between the Tomba of old and the wiser, settled mao that he is now is that he used to compete in super-giant slaloms to score vital World Cup points. His best result in a World Cup Super-G was fourth in 1988.

Since 1989 and a bad fall in Val D'Isere, he decided to shun speed events to concentrate on slaloms but he will have to change his mind to retain hopes of landing the grand prize.

His coach Gustavo Thoeni said he hoped to persuade him to enter at least a few super-giants. Twelve special events and one technical event are scheduled before the end of the season.

"Alberto has what it takes. He only needs to be convinced about it," he said.

In the meantime, Tomba will concentrate on winning the slalom world title he missed in 1989, 1991 and 1993. "I've worked very hard these last few years and it is paying off at last. Now I'm ready for the worlds," he said.

A dog of a year for sports and drugs

PARIS (AFP) — When the Chinese heralded in the year of the dog last January little did the country's sports authorities realise just what a dog of a year it would turn out to be.

By the time December came, China's sports machine had been disgraced by one of the biggest drugs scandals in sports history.

Their much-honoured women's swimming team had turned from a collection of world champions to a sorry group of cheats who had reached the top by taking drugs.

The Chinese expose — thanks to drug testing at the Asian Games in Hiroshima — was a time bomb waiting to explode. Since the demise of East Germany there has been widespread rumours amongst international sports groups that China imported not only East German coaches but the East German expertise at doping their athletes.

The 11 Chinese athletes hustled to Hiroshima all tested positive for dihydrotestosterone (DHT). The drug was an East German favourite and, according to Don Catlin, director of the Olympic lab in Los Angeles, ten times more potent than testosterone.

"It's sophisticated doping, not hush league," said Catlin recently.

The China Connection has only half helped underline how drugs have seemingly become a key player in international success.

A host of top athletes from

the west are strongly suspected of using drugs but despite the use of widespread testing the private chemists and doctors employed by the athletes are more skillful than the testers.

The victims of this squalid tale may indeed be the convicted athletes like 17-year-old swimmer Lu Bin, who believed sincerely that she was the fastest woman in the world after breaking the 200 metres individual medley record in October.

Like Brito's Diane Modahl, she was convinced of her innocence. And who can say she chose to be pumped up with steroids and advanced masking agents, which sports medicine experts know can only be produced through intensive research and development.

Disgraced Liu and the others may be more sinned against than sinning.

Benetton and Michael Schumacher kept motor racing running on a sleaze sick. The team were beset by allegations but nothing too disgraceful was ever proved, though Benetton were fined heavily for a string of minor rule breaches.

Schumacher became the first German and the youngest world champion ever. He won the title by a point from Damon Hill after a controversial collision at Adelaide.

In July at Silverstone, he was handed for two races for ignoring a black flag and was disqualified five hours after winning the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa-Francorchamps.

because his car was illegal. Cricketer's mythology of fair was debunked with Michael Atherton's England captaincy in crisis more than once.

A whiff of sleaze was in the air as details of Atherton's ball-tampering against South Africa in the second Test at Lord's emerged.

In the next Test at the Oval he was fined 1,200 pounds and severely reprimanded for dissent by Test match referee Peter Burge.

Atherton, whose position was already shaky after the dirt-in-the-pocket affair, came under extreme pressure to resign.

At Lord's, Atherton was fined 2,000 pounds for the tampering incident and for later misleading Burge during a subsequent inquiry.

They do things on a grander scale in America, where everyone loves a winner. The entourage of ice skater Tonya Harding devised a novel way to ensure she could not fail. They used an iron bar on her rival Nancy Kerrigan.

But Tonya got her comeuppance and is serving three years probation. Battered Nancy still went to the Olympics, finishing with the silver medal and a place in every true American heart. Even her halo is slipping, accused of running away with her coach and marriage-breaking.

Meanwhile Tonya wants bigger breasts to attract bigger pay cheques for her modelling work and plans to undergo cosmetic surgery. There's no cheat like a big

cheat and vertically challenged Diego Maradona fits the bill. His roller-coaster career after his World Cup drugs bust continues.

A court prosecutor wants him jailed for four years for wounding journalists with an air rifle in February in one of the many low points of his career.

You have to admire plucky Diego who retorted: "What I did is nothing compared to the acts carried out by the military during the dictatorship." And they got away scot free.

Dictatorship is on the agenda in football's corridors of power. The European Football Federation, UEFA, are so upset at world football supreme Joao Havelange's antics that they have threatened to pull out of the 1998 World Cup and split from the august world body FIFA.

The Asian Football Confederation have also condemned Havelange's "autocracy" in back door deals over top committee appointments at October's executive meeting in New York.

Havelange, who got himself elected as FIFA president this year for a record sixth term, drew up the lists himself and broke no discussion of the appointments.

Football in Britain may never clean up its act with Tottenham Hotspur winning an appeal over financial irregularities. The club had had six points deducted and were banned from the FA Cup after being found guilty on 35 charges of financial irregularities at an FA disciplinary hearing.

Arsehal have forgiven Paul Merson for cocaine abuse but their manager George Graham may not be able to wriggle out of a 'hung' probe so easily. He is alleged to have accepted a 285,000 pound illegal payment in a transfer deal. Graham denies the charge.

Then there is Bruce Grobelaar, the worst corruption case in a generation. The former Liverpool goalkeeper, now with Southampton, is alleged to have fixed matches in exchange for big bucks from an Asian betting ring.

The Asians have enough trouble at home. More than 40 Malaysian players have been arrested since October for corruption, endemic to the region's soccer league.

Cheating is not confined to the big-money sports following reports recently of steroid abuse in the cloth-cap world of British pigeon racing, where birds on drugs fly higher, faster, longer.

Nor does sleaze have to come by the huckster. Ponder the case of Olav Nygaard, who used an old-fashioned hose pipe. The Norwegian ice engineer at the Lillehammer Olympics was told his team were unhappy with the ice on the speed skating track.

Nygaard soured into the stadium overnight and sprayed their favoured spring water on the surface. He was found out and reprimanded, but takes the credit for three world records achieved on his ice-cocktail.

Lone Atlantic swimmer completes 10th of journey

PARIS (AFP) — Lone swimmer Guy Delage has completed a tenth of his 4,000-kilometre crossing of the Atlantic after taking the plunge a week ago, his Paris headquarters said on Friday.

The 42-year-old Frenchman has recovered from his seasickness and "I am feeling much better now that I have started eating again," he told French radio by satellite telephone.

The phone is installed aboard a raft drifting alongside Delage.

The swimmer said his severe seasickness had been caused by violent movements of the raft in a strong swell. He had originally planned to spend ten hours a day in the water, sleeping and eating aboard the raft.

"For the first three days I held out by spending very little time in the water. I had to deal with rough seas with a swell of four or five metres (13 to 16 feet). But now the wind has dropped and the sea is calmer," Delage said.

He said he had seen a shark on the first night after setting out from Mindelo in the Cape Verde islands, off West Africa, heading for the West Indies. The shark bit the raft's floating anchor. "It was OK, I wasn't in the water, and I haven't seen any others."

When aboard the raft, which is equipped with an automatic pilot, Delage continues heading westwards thanks to prevailing currents. When he completes his journey, he will have actually swum only about half of the 4,000 kilometres.

When swimming Delage is not attached to the raft. He is equipped with flippers and rests his arms on a small float fitted with survival equipment including an anti-shark gun.

FOR RENT

Two opposite apartments in a new building in a V.I.P. location, furnished and unfurnished. Each one is composed of 3 bedrooms, living room, reception, 3 toilets, veranda and garage. The area of each apartment is 190 square metres.

Location: Jabal Amman-3rd Circle beside the German Cultural Centre (Goethe).

For more information, please call (647471). The owner will be in Amman till the 27th of December.

*Note: We also have a roof for sale. Please: No brokers allowed.

NEW VILLA FOR RENT

Composed of the following:

1. Ground floor of 2 bedrooms, bathroom and a master bedroom with bathroom and living hall, dining hall and kitchen with store room and side terrace with a car-park along with surrounding garden and ground water tank.
2. Basement floor of a shelter room and boiler-room. Super deluxe, newly designed, fittings.

Location: Al Jandawel, Wadi Asfer.

Annual rent: JD6000

Tel. 822648

HOUSEKEEPER AVAILABLE
Personal housekeeper looking for work in home, not live-in. Hard working & good natured.
Call 642251-2 Room 208

YVES SAINT LAURENT
variation
Harl Lagerfeld
BIG Sale
UP TO 50%
At **BADIA BOUTIQUE**
Rainbow St. Jebel Amman
1st Circle - Tel: 657094

VACANCY

An international agency is seeking a dynamic person to work on a one-year project in preparation of a global conference. The job involves data collection and dissemination, networking, set-up and maintenance of information system and might involve travel in the region. Eligible candidates should have the following qualification:

- ★ Minimum of a university degree in social sciences or MIS
- ★ Excellent language skills in Arabic and English.
- ★ Excellent writing abilities.
- ★ High computer fluency.
- ★ Good administrative skills and public relations abilities.
- ★ Interest in social development issues.

Those interested should send a CV with a covering letter before 31 December 1994 to:
P.O. Box: 830896 Zahran, Amman.

New Year's Eve
'Gala dinner'
'Masquerade'
at the
ROZENA INN
For reservations
Tel: 613572/630571

AMMAN BACCALAUREATE SCHOOL
invites applications for teaching posts in all subject areas for the academic year 1995/1996.
Applicants should:
1) be bilingual, in English and Arabic.
English language teachers must be native speakers.
2) have teaching experience in their subject area.
Application forms may be obtained from the school.
phone 845572, 847191-2-3, 831502, and should be submitted during the period 2, 3, 4, 5, January 1995.
Administration

STARTEX & INTERNATIONAL TRADES

315 W. 9th Street Suite 704
The Coast Savings Building
Los Angeles Ca 90015
Tel.: 213-488-9872, tel.: 213-488-9873, Fax: 213-488-9630

We are an export company of U.S.A. products worldwide. We have the reputation of good service & quality products at very competitive prices, and we strive for excellence. We handle the whole package deal for you, from sourcing to purchasing, handling, and delivering to your country port. We welcome inquiries, long & short term contracts from both government & public sectors. We offer chemicals, food, industrial equipment, and much more. Here are some of the products we offer:

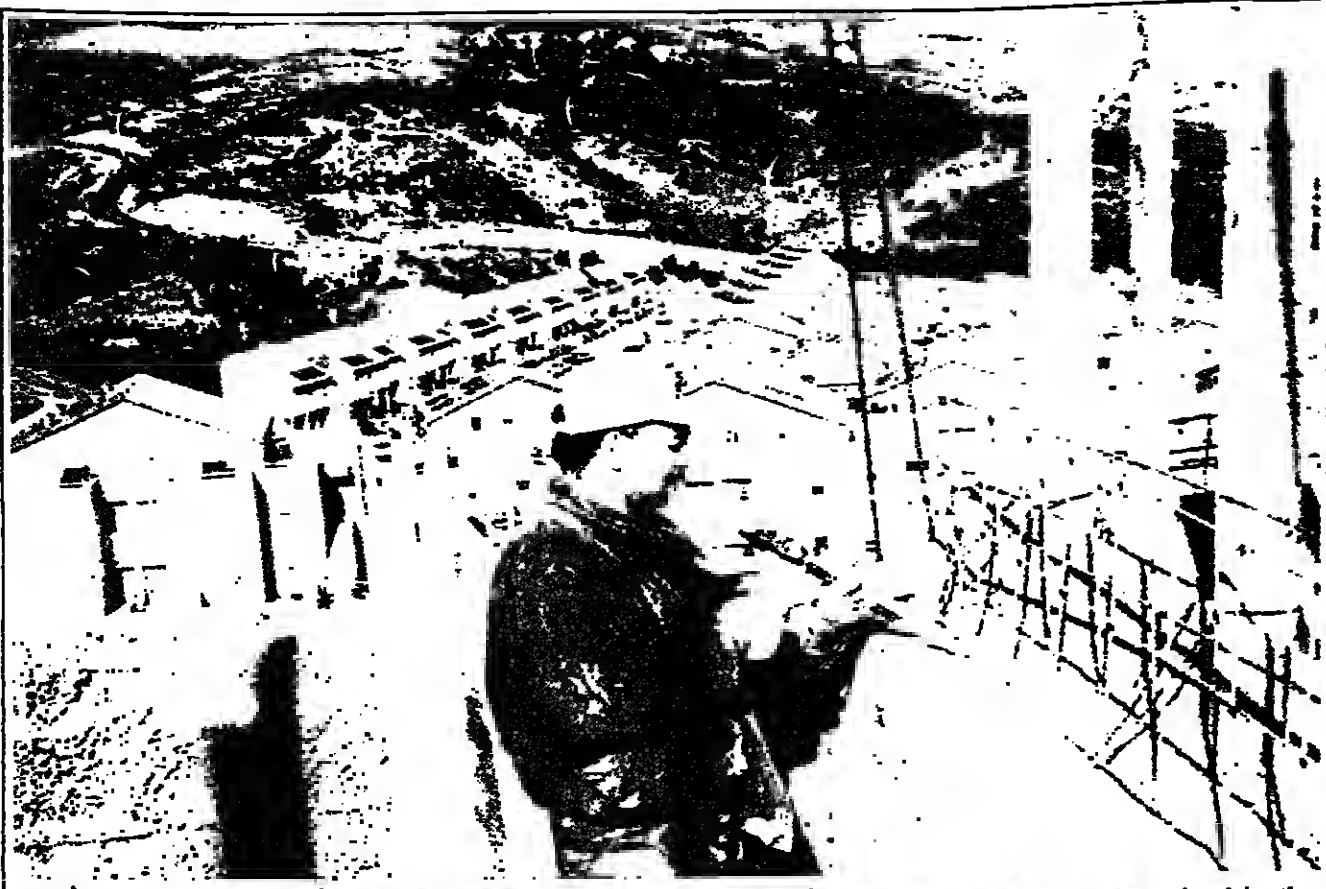
- ★ **CHEMICAL INDUSTRY:**
 1. Biomedical products such as: radiochemicals; cell biology/tissue culture compounds; organic rare and fine chemicals; diagnostic instruments & reagents; and labware.
 2. Chemical products for research, development, small production, industrial, dye, and other applications, 14,000 organic and inorganic chemicals for prompt delivery.
- ★ **FOOD INDUSTRY:** Food products, agricultural equipment and supplies, ethnic food, health food, trade mark labels, and industrial food ingredients.
- ★ **INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENTS & SUPPLIES:** Business furniture, computer equipment, accessories & supplies, generators, metals, electrical & electronics, agricultural equipment & supplies, industrial materials of construction (such as hot rolled and galvanized steel products, aluminium and stainless steel), computer analysed design and complete engineering drawings, custom designs and special fabrications, material certified welding procedures, industrial alloy supplies, industrial commercial products, industrial tapes, automobile industries, auto parts, automobile electronics & equipment, industrial hydraulics, medical & optical instrumentation, rotary drum systems, molded silicone rubber, convex mirrors, industrial wear such as: accessories; coveralls; labcoats etc., elevators and elevator equipments, casters & wheels, industrial heating, modern kitchens & aluminium sinks and stoves, tires, scientific & lab instruments, printing machinery & equipment, photo industry, brass/bronze valves (low & high pressure valves), fiber glass products, air technical industries, fibers, plastics, security systems and products, paints, die products & equipment, furniture & upholstery manufacturing equipment, coating material & equipment, catalytic & thermal combustion systems, lift trucks, batteries, and industrial chemical equipments, industrial furnaces & ovens, fire protection equipment, hydraulic tools compressors, and much more.

For information about specific product & inquiry, contact our office in Los Angeles, California at our fax #213-488-9630, and your inquiry will be forwarded immediately to the personnel serving your region, and our staff are skilled in Arabic language to better understand your needs.

Our goal is to give you quality product, prompt service, and competitive prices. Very soon we will be opening our regional offices in your area to better serving you.

Any product offered will be subject to both countries restrictions & regulations.

TODAY	Cinema	Tel.: 634144	Cinema	Tel.: 699238	Cinema	Tel.: 677420	Tel.: 618274 - 618275	Tel.: 675571	Tel.: 625155
	PHILADELPHIA		PLAZA		CONCORD		AMMOUN THEATRE	Nabil Al Mashini Theatre	AHLAM THEATRE
	Presents: A world famed movie picture worth watching: THE FLINTSTONES Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Michel York/Jennifer O'Neill — in DISCREETION ASSURED Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00, 7:30, 9:30, 10:30		CONCORD '1' Robin Williams — In Mrs. Doubtfire Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD '2' Harrison Ford — In The Fugitive Shows: 3:15, 5:00		will soon present: Mousa Hijazlin (SUM'AA) In the satirical political comedy: Hi Citizen	Presents Abu Awwad In the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	Presents: The political satire: Al Salam Ya Salam. Daily at 8:30 Saturday & Sunday is the theatre's holiday. In English Sundays December 11, 18, only.



SETTLEMENT: A worker builds a new house at the Maale Adumim Jewish settlement near Jerusalem on Friday. As thousands of new flats are built to strengthen Jewish

presence in the Jerusalem area, Palestinians who claim the land in the West Bank sometimes try to halt construction work (see page one) (AFP photo)

Iraq assails Saudi and Kuwaiti policies

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq launched a scathing attack on the rulers of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia Friday, condemning their foreign policy as "stupid."

"The leaders of Riyadh and Kuwait bear full responsibility for the stupid policy that is keeping things as they are in the Gulf and the Arab arena in general," Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told the official agency INA.

"Their real policy is to serve U.S. interests. They spread instability to justify the United States' military occupation of the region and the plundering of its wealth," Aziz said.

At a three-day summit in Bahrain this week the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, refused to yield to Qatari pressure to ease sanctions against Iraq.

The GCC welcomed as a "positive step" Iraq's decision to recognise Kuwait on Nov. 10, but said Baghdad's compliance with international resolutions would be "essential in proving its peaceful intentions" toward Kuwait and the GCC.

Baghdad has been pressing for a lifting of sanctions imposed after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

U.N. resolutions call for the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the return of Kuwaiti prisoners and war reparations.

Iranian factions wrangle over Shiite leadership

NICOSIA (R) — Differences among Iran's ruling clergy over the supreme leadership of Shiite Muslims and the nature of the Islamic state have burst into the open.

One faction has accused its rivals of fostering "new Salim Rushdies" — referring to the British novelist branded an apostate by many Muslims and the highest contemporary villain in the eyes of the Shiite clergy.

The severity of the attack underlines the importance of the debate among the heirs of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who differ over the balance of power between the Islamic state to be established in 1979 and the Shiite clerical hierarchy.

Should the Islamic state, headed by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, dominate the religious Shiite hierarchy?

Or should the clerical establishment, which for centuries was outside the state structure and at times successfully challenged the governments of the time, be strengthened?

Iranian media vigorously promoted Ayatollah Khamenei as the top Shiite spiritual guide, or marja taqid (source of emulation), since a senior marja, contemporary Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Araki, died in Tehran last month.

Mr. Khamenei's supporters publicly voiced fears that if an apolitical ayatollah is allowed to gather a large following and therefore influence as a marja, he could undermine the Islamic state by issuing rulings against its policies.

Dr. Aziz said Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were "provoking hostility... despite a number of positive steps taken by Iraq toward Kuwait and other Gulf states."

Russia, France and China have set the ball rolling for lifting the four-year old U.N. economic embargo on Iraq, an official newspaper said here Friday.

"The atmosphere in the U.N. Security Council shows that a serious effort has begun toward recognising Iraq's compliance with international resolutions" ending the 1991 Gulf war, the ruling Baath Party daily Al Thawra said.

"Russia's voice, along with France's and China's and supported by a clear majority requesting an end to injustice, has become stronger and more credible than" those of headline United States and Britain, it added.

Only "a minority still insists on harming Iraq, but it is getting smaller and will be limited to the United States and Britain which are blinded by their historic hatred of the Iraqi people and its leadership," it said.

"But we should not show too much optimism and expect a rapid lifting of the embargo," Al Thawra cautioned.

"But all new indications confirm that the lifting of the embargo has been put on

(Continued on page 7)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Damascus pact ministers to meet in January

CAIRO (AFP) — Foreign ministers from Egypt, Syria and six Gulf Arab monarchies are to meet next month in Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Friday. Egypt proposed that the meeting of Damascus Declaration signatories take place on Jan. 11 or 12, a Foreign Ministry official said. Leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, agreed to meeting during their summit in Bahrain which ended Wednesday, the official added. The Damascus Declaration was signed in March 1991 to boost economic and military cooperation between Egypt, Syria and the GCC after Iraqi troops were ousted from Kuwait by a U.S.-led coalition. But despite several meetings between the foreign ministers since then the declaration has not been implemented.

Two militants killed in Egypt

ASSIUT (R) — Egyptian police shot dead two Muslim militants at dawn on Friday near the southern town of Al Badari, security sources said. They said police, acting on a tip, exchanged fire with the gunmen at a cemetery outside the village of Nowawarah, 330 kilometres south of Cairo. The sources named the gunmen as Heshmat Abdul Halim and Rafat Al Nukrashi and said they were members of the Gamaa Al Islamiya (Islamic Group), which has waged a campaign of violence against the government of President Hosni Mubarak since 1992. A pistol stolen from a policeman and a home-made gun were found at the scene. Some 540 people, mostly police and militants, have been killed and more than 850 injured since the Gamaa launched its campaign.

Israel says 10 of 20 wanted in 1992 now dead

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's outgoing army chief said in a newspaper interview published on Friday that of 12 Palestinians that appeared on a 1992 most-wanted list, only two remain alive. Yediot Ahronoth daily quoted Chief of Staff Ehud Barak as vowing his forces would hunt the men still at large — militants suspected of masterminding suicide bombings that have killed dozens of people since April. General Barak, asked to sum up security force's performance in the Gaza Strip and West Bank during his four-year term, said: "The effort invested by Shin Bet (secret police) and our operational units there was very successful. 'Not long ago I found a file with pictures of fugitives, that we put out two years ago for the use of soldiers in the territories. Of the 12 wanted men pictured there, only two are still alive, the 'engineer' Yihye Ayyash and his assistant — and in the end we'll catch those two as well." Gen. Barak did not detail the circumstances of the men's deaths. Mr. Ayyash, an activist of Hamas, has been the subject of a huge manhunt since an October bus bombing in central Tel Aviv in which 22 people and a suicide bomber died.

Last Indian troops pull out of Somalia

MOGADISHU (R) — The last 470 Indian "Blue Helms" from a contingent that numbered 5,000 flew out of Somalia on Friday as part of the phased withdrawal of United Nations forces from the failed mission. The Indians, who flew out of Mogadishu bound for Bombay, left behind about 10,000 other U.N. peacekeepers who are set to pull out of Somalia by March 31. Mogadishu's district of Medina, close to the U.N.-controlled airport, was gripped by fierce inter-clan fighting this week in which 23 were killed and 120 wounded. As Somalia slips back into the clan feuding that tore the country apart before U.S.-led forces landed in December 1991, U.N. officials fear their retreat could be obstructed by clan militias out to plunder military hardware and vehicles. A force of up to 4,000 U.S. Marines, possibly backed by the Spectre AC-130 gunship planes that blitzed warlord Mohammed Farah Aided's positions last year, will be on hand to cover the final days of the U.N. forces' withdrawal.

'Paris, Riyadh in secret security pact'

PARIS (R) — France will provide Saudi Arabia with internal security experts, sophisticated weapons and counter-terrorism training under a secret pact reached last month, a leftist monthly reported on Thursday. The monthly Le Nouvel Afrique Asie, citing confidential sources, said Paris agreed to send up to 120 French counter-terrorism, security and counter-intelligence experts to Riyadh to train Saudi forces in internal security techniques. Bernard Guillet, diplomatic adviser to Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, told Reuters "there is absolutely no truth to the magazine report. There's nothing credible about it." The magazine said Paris agreed to train some Saudi military officers on French soil, in security techniques, and to sell Riyadh unspecified sophisticated arms. The pact was part of an agreement signed in Riyadh in November by Mr. Pasqua and Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz, it said. Mr. Pasqua, at the close of a three-day visit to Riyadh in mid-November, had said there was an agreement "to develop border guards" for the kingdom. The French daily Le Monde said at the time that the pact — which centred on ways in which France could contribute to the defence, protection and surveillance of Saudi borders — also included the sale of security arms, but Mr. Pasqua denied arms were part of the deal.

Christmas is industry in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, occupied West Bank (R) — The week before Christmas the Jesus industry is in full swing in Bethlehem, catering to every religious taste from fine olive-wood crèches to bags of holy land soil on which Christ may once have walked.

Hundreds of tour and pilgrim buses daily disgorged the good and the gullible into the town's shop-lined Manger Square and the supermarket-sized stores along the road from Jerusalem.

The good news this year for the Palestinian Authority which has just taken over tourism from the occupying Israeli military government is that the number of tourists is up. The bad news is that they are not buying.

Thousands of families here turn the garbled olive trees into the olive trees into nativity sets, tree ornaments, rosaries, bible covers, crucifixes and candles. They also play some of their work with mother-of-pearl.

"Business locally is down 30 per cent this year and down 50 per cent on exports to the United States," says George Handal, who employs 50 men.

Their hair powdered with fine sawdust, they turn out rough figures on copying machines and finish the faces with bits like a dentist's drill.

"The last chisel-and-file sculptor died 20 years ago," said Mr. Handal, who inherited the factory from his father.

Some of the faces show the lack of the artist's hand. Crude, machine-tooled features stare down at a small lump in a manager, encased in a stable. The lot, cluttered in vishvish, would set you back \$20. For a few dollars more, you can wind up the five-pointed star above the stable and listen to "Silent Night".

Finer work, where the faces have a glimmer of human expression, costs \$50 and up, explains Salem Giacaman, one of a few big retailers in Manger Square who sees business picking up after the doldrums years of the Palestinian uprising and Gulf war.

He exports directly to the biggest olive-wood sculpture market, the United States, to shield himself from the ups and downs of the local economy.

Most merchants have also insured themselves by expanding their range of goods, spawning a new industry in holy land products. Israeli retailers have latched onto this, selling sachets of earth, phials of Jordan River water and cross-bedecked Jerusalem candles alongside Judaica.

Israel handed over the self-rule enclaves of Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank to the Palestine Liberation Organisation this year, along with responsibility over five spheres of life in the rest of the West Bank.

But many Palestinians in the West Bank said the festivities were still marred by Israeli occupation.

As in previous years in Bethlehem, Israeli soldiers clutched M-16 automatic

Jordan lauds GCC stand on Jerusalem

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has expressed satisfaction over a statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in Bahrain over the status of Jerusalem and the Middle East peace process.

A statement by a Jordanian official spokesman said that the GCC's final declaration has displayed concern over a number of issues of concern to the Arab countries, including the differences marred Arab relations and the need to remove the causes of differences and a commitment to safeguard and uphold the interests and security and the future of the Arab Nation.

"We in Jordan are particularly satisfied over the statement concerning Jerusalem and its insistence that no

change in the character of the Arab city or of the pre-1967 borders be made, and we are satisfied with the statement's call for the full implementation of U.N. resolutions concerning the Holy City," said the spokesman.

The spokesman said that the Jordanian government "appreciates and welcomes the GCC's stand with regard to the steps" taken in the Middle East peace process so far, including the Jordan-Israel peace treaty and the self-rule agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

He said that Jordan also welcomes the GCC's call on the co-sponsors of the Middle East peace conference to intensify their efforts to achieve further progress on the Syria-Israel and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

Palestinians hope for merrier Christmas

BETHLEHEM, occupied West Bank (R) — A young Palestinian, ignoring Israeli soldiers in riot gear in Manger Square, has been driving around Bethlehem promising that Palestinians in the birthplace of Jesus Christ will have a merry Christmas.

"This year we have more joy and people are optimistic that we will finally have peace," said 21-year-old Rashed Haddad. "People want to be happy and have a good time."

Mr. Haddad handed out invitations to a night of dancing and drinking at his new "Earthquake Club" while a friend dressed in a Santa Claus uniform rang a Christmas bell.

After the violence of seven years of an uprising against Israeli occupation, Palestinians now appear to be in the mood to celebrate.

Restaurants advertise exquisite Christmas eve dinners including entertainment by local singers at \$25 a person. Store windows are lit up with Christmas trees and colourful lights. Ornaments hang from lamp posts in Manger Square.

"This is the first Christmas in years where people really feel ready to celebrate," said businessman Nicola Canawati.

Israel handed over the self-rule enclaves of Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank to the Palestine Liberation Organisation this year, along with responsibility over five spheres of life in the rest of the West Bank.

But many Palestinians in the West Bank said the festivities were still marred by Israeli occupation.

As in previous years in Bethlehem, Israeli soldiers clutched M-16 automatic

rifles peered down from rooftops over Manger Square while others stood on main street corners.

Young Palestinian men looked over their shoulders while passing posters on walls reminding people of the nearly 6,000 Palestinian prisoners still held in Israeli jails.

In his annual pre-Christmas message, the Roman Catholic leader of the Holy Land, Michel Sabbah, warned Israeli and Palestinian leaders that opposition to their peace moves would grow unless they sped up the peace process.

Many Palestinian businessmen complained of economic hardships, the result of an inexplicable decline in tourism revenues even though nearly one million pilgrims visited Bethlehem in 1994.

Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem came to a halt seven years ago when Palestinians in the occupied territories rose in revolt against Israeli military rule.

The holiday, which used to attract thousands of Christians from around the West Bank, was limited to religious ceremonies as Israeli soldiers threw a tight ring of security around Manger Square on Christmas eve.

Last year there was controversy over the raising of a Palestinian flag over the town hall. This year dozens of Palestinian flags flew from the three-storey hall and from flag poles around a fountain in front of the building.

But George Sammour, director of the tourism office in Bethlehem, said: "Our joy is still incomplete. True joy would come once we celebrate Christmas under our own Palestinian sovereignty."

COLUMN

Londonderry lights up Bethlehem with gift

LONDONDERRY, Northern Ireland (R) — Northern Ireland's second city London derry has sent Christmas decorations to Bethlehem in a gesture of solidarity between two towns enjoying their first true Christmas peace for decades. Jim Guy, mayor of Londonderry, said he gave a space set of Christmas lights to the West Bank town so Manger Square, reputedly where Christ was born, could enjoy a proper display. Bethlehem's Christian Mayor Elias Freij had told a visiting delegation of Londonderry community leaders in October he dreamt of marking the Christmas holiday and the Arab-Israeli peace process with Christmas lights. Mr. Guy said Friday.

Huston heirs win \$120,000 damages over coloured film

VERSAILES, France (AFP) — A court of appeal here the heirs of U.S. director John Huston and co-script writer Ben Maddow for a coloured version of his black-and-white classic Asphat Jungle. The defunct French television channel La Cinq and distributors Ted Turner group lost their appeal here and the court found they had "damaged the creativity" of Huston and Maddow. La Cinq was ordered to pay 200,000 francs of the damages and Turner the rest.

Child molester gets 30,000 year sentence

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oklahoma (R) — It will be a long time before Charles Scott Robinson is able to walk the streets again. A very long time — about 30,000 years. A judge Thursday agreed with a jury's recommendation and sentenced Robinson, a convicted child molester, to the 30,000 years in prison. A jury deliberated only 35 minutes on Dec. 14 before finding Robinson, accused of sexually assaulting a three-year-old girl, guilty of rape by instrumentality, two counts of forcible oral sodomy and three counts of indecent or lewd acts with a child under 16. When advised they could not assess a life sentence without parole, jurors returned with a recommendation of 5,000 years on each of the six counts. Judge Dan Owens made it official Thursday by formally sentencing Robinson, aged 30 and convicted eight times previously of non-violent crimes, to the 30,000-year term recommended by the jury. "We don't want him to have a chance to ever get out again," jury foreman Laura Bixler said last week after the panel made its recommendation.

State-run lotteries to be shut down in New Delhi

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The New Delhi authorities on Wednesday banned state-run lotteries in the capital saying the lure of becoming millionaires overnight was turning more and more people into virtual paupers. New Delhi Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana said he will shut down the annual \$30-million lottery from New Year's Day in consideration to families whose bread-earners have been paralysed by the lottery-bug. "The loss of revenue is nothing compared to the enormity of the disease," Mr. Khurana said. He added that he would request other state administrations not to allow the sale of their lotteries in the Indian capital. The step follows growing protests against lotteries here by housewives' forums complaining that the dream of becoming millionaires overnight were luring more people into state-sponsored gambling. Mr. Khurana's administration said it will also slap a 20-per cent tax on lottery tickets sold here by other Indian state governments in a bid to discourage people addicted to the official sweepstakes. Uncounted millions daily play the Indian lotteries, which offer huge cash prizes in return for the low-priced tickets. Rallies and demonstrations are staged frequently in the capital against state-run lotteries in this city of 10 million people.